

Sectatus sum

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Sectatus sum

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

The point, Will, is that Love is.. tricky.

A guy needs to protect himself, so I had to be sure you're safe and your name was a glorious place to start.

Not a lot of Will Grahams that are involved with the amount of murder you are.

Instead of Beck, Will Graham walks into Joe Goldberg's bookstore and Joe gains a new obsession.

Hello There, You.

The light shines through the shelves and gently caresses the grounds of the bookshop. The bell on top of the door jingles, announcing the presence of someone. The floorboards creak under the pressure of worn out winter boots, an outdoor-type of person.

And well, hello there.

Who are *you*?

I barely catch the glimpse of a green overused flannel that is adorned by different pieces of dog hair, *many* different pieces.

You enter the shop in a rush, walking fast towards the "D" section. Your eyes dart all across the room with quick glances.

You run one of your calloused hands, your left one, through your dark curls as your eyes scan the shelves analytically.

In frustration, the hand now moves to adjusting your glasses and then to clean off the sweat on stained jeans.

Your posture screams that you don't seem very keen on having anyone talk to you at all. So, why are you walking up to me?

You must be pretty desperate.

"Do you work here?" You say. Your eyes are everywhere but on my face, right now you're looking at the ground. Are you perhaps shy or is the ground that interesting?

"Guilty." I reply and watch as your brows raise for a moment, then you look up at me and y--

Wait. What was *that*?

Your gaze, it's intensity. It looked like you were scrutinizing my soul, my essence.

For a split second, I saw myself staring back.

It's terrifying.

You look at the ground and the corner of your mouth twitches upwards as you speak. "Dante's paradise. Do you have it?"

"Interesting choice." Usually people go for the Inferno, but you have something clear in mind.

I walk you to the classics section and from one of the shelves I pull the medieval tome. I take a minute to appreciate the hardcover edition of the eighties, fully illustrated by Gustave Doré as it's smell fills me with a sense of tranquility.

Glancing upwards, I see you're not quite here anymore, are you? You're distant.

"Personal read?" You don't even care enough to hide your eye roll as I bring you back to earth with my attempt at small talk, you really don't want to be here.

You look down at the book that I'm holding towards you, like a treat that is given when trying to tame a stray animal and you take it from me delicately. "No. I need it for a lecture."

A professor, then.

Literature? No, in that case you would already have a copy at home. There's something more.

"What do you teach?"

Sighing, your grip on the book tightens while you look ahead of you and push up your glasses. Definitely some sort of tick.

"Criminal profiling."

Very interesting. That would explain your observing nature, in fact you're doing it right now by pinning a middle-aged brooklynite right out of central casting under your gaze.

He just grabbed Dan Brown's latest on the way in. So he's gonna wander around for another, like, five or ten minutes, just to find something legitimate to buy with it.

You pause and look into my eyes for a brief moment. "All he really wants to do is eat Cheetos and jerk it to iPorn before washing it all down with a Dan Brown chaser. He's probably going to grab a book by a critically acclaimed writer from the 20th century. Not too old but not too modern."

Ah, I get "your thing" now, you read people and you do it well. Hey, that's a thing we have in common. Our eyes follow that man as he walks through the bookshop blissfully unaware and that's another thing we have in common, we don't get noticed.

Or at least, you don't want to get noticed, but nonetheless you do.

"He's in the S section. J.D. Salinger. The Catcher in the rye?" I ask, lowering my voice and leaning down towards you.

You back away and raise your brows sarcastically as you glance quickly at me, then you tilt your head. How twitchy.

"Not quite. Too much of a normie choice. Franny & Zooey." You matched my tone and lowered your voice, almost whispering, even though the man is far enough.

Oh, so we're bantering now?

"Hello? Anyone working here?" That guy interrupts our thing we had going on, because of course he does.

I look over to you and you're already walking the other way, but as you turn the corner I can see a slight smile on your lips.

I go behind the counter and watch as that guy gives me on top of the latest Dan Brown a copy of Franny & Zooey. How predictable.

"Do you mind? Uh, I'm in a hurry."

He's just pissed he's gotta buy Salinger to feel respectable when all he really wants to do is eat Cheet-

Oh.

I look over and see you behind him, with Dante's paradiso in your hand. You weren't just watching him, were you? You were also watching me. You took those words straight out of my mind.

Who are you?

"Have a nice day, sir." I say and the man leaves. You walk towards me and the smile you had before has disappeared. You don't smile a lot. If you do, it's sarcastic and without any type of humor.

"You were right." I say.

You raise your eyebrows and nod silently, basically giving me a "of course I was"-type-of-look. Then you look at my colleague, not in his eyes of course, but in his general direction. Your not quite a smile then becomes a frown as you avert your eyes.

Do you know him? No. He knows you.

Ethan clears his throat and squeaks out awkwardly: "Paradise? Why not the inferno or purgatory?"

"Lecture." You say, mumbling.

"Oh god, is it about that guy who transforms people into angels?" You stay silent and scrunch up your nose in disgust. You really did not want to get recognized.

You pay with cash, probably for convenience but also because you're holding onto the little amount of dignity you have left, you don't want me to know you.

It's too late for that.

"Have a nice day."

"You have one yourself" You pause, looking down at my name tag. "Joe." And then you're gone.

Suddenly, Ethan exhales, like he had been holding that breath ever since you came near the counter, and he shudders.

"Dude. That was creepy."

"What?"

"Oh- What? You don't know who that guy is? He's this guy who thinks like serial killers. That's how he catches them. He works for the FBI."

No, that's not quite right, is it? You deduced from Ethan's expression that he knew you and from mine that I didn't. That's not difficult, but managing not only to get a read on how I think but also how that guy from earlier thinks, isn't exactly easy. That would mean Mr Dan Brown's fan doesn't only have Cheeto dust on his hands, but also blood, which isn't likely. No, you can read everyone.

Ethan just shakes his head in disbelief and he sighs. "Google him, Joe. Will Graham." He says, like I wasn't going to do that already, stressing your name before turning around and I already know what he's going to say.

I grab the cart full of books and walk away as I hear him speak.

"If you need me, I'll be in cookbooks. But for work. Not for fun. I swear."

Now at least I have your name and surname, not that it would've been hard to find since I already knew your profession and what you taught.

Your name obviously has some bad stuff attached to it though, so much so you wanted me to know you without those preconceived notions.

Because why else would you egg me on? Giving me your rare smiles and whispering with me in the shadows of the shelves.

You're lonely, Will. People don't like you. They mostly react like Ethan did, they get scared or weirded out.

At the end of the day, people are really just disappointing, aren't they? But are you, Will? Are you?

Yes, people find "the one." I believe that, I try to stay open. I was in love once. She broke my heart, Will. Ugh, she really did a number on me. I should've seen the signs, but we never do when we're in love.

The point, Will, is that Love is.. tricky.

A guy needs to protect himself, so I had to be sure you're safe and your name was a glorious place to start.

Not a lot of Will Grahams that are involved with the amount of murder you are.

You're private, no social media. Of course I can still figure out some things about who you are.

You teach at the FBI Academy, in Quantico, Virginia. Just by looking up your name in the site under the "video" folder I can watch a snippet of one of your lectures. The title says "The murder of Cassie Boyle".

Bookmarked for later.

You don't want to get noticed, like I said before, but alas you constantly get noticed. Especially by Tattlecrime.com, which is one of the first sites that pop up when googling your name.

Not a very reliable site, judging by the fact that to the left of your own article there is another one titled **"IN THE MINNESOTA SHRIKE'S NEST: EXCLUSIVE PHOTOS!"** accompanied by many bloody pictures taken illegally. Your own article also has a catchy title: **"IT TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE."**



How nice.

They don't understand you, Will, nobody does. As I skim through the article I start understanding that they look at you and see a psychopath, because how else would you be able to empathize with these people who commit atrocious crimes?

You were teaching until now, since like what your most avid fan, Freddie Lounds, said, you failed the psychological evaluation to become an agent. But you were brought into the field by the head of the behavioral unit, your boss, Jack Crawford, so that he could "borrow your imagination". But since you failed your psychological evaluation and are deemed by basically everyone as unstable, they assigned you a psychiatrist, Doctor Hannibal Lecter, who is legally just a consultant on these cases.

As I switch from Tattlecrime.com to other tabs, I start venturing into psychiatric corners. It seems that those who don't see you as a serial killing bomb ready to explode any second now, or a metal detector to swish around at a crime scene, see you as a little lab rat on whom they can run experiments on. How dehumanizing.

I switch back to Tattlecrime.com and I notice in the right corner a folder: "**CANDIDS**". I click. There's many, many gruesome photos. God. Does the FBI even try to stop these guys? But there's also many photos of you, so their incompetence is mostly forgiven.

Wow Will, you don't look okay.

In a lot of these pictures you look so shaken, so out of yourself. Drenched in sweat and frowning, nothing like those smiles that didn't quite reach your eyes that you gave me today. Just what does looking at these corpses all day do to you?

Your boss is also always looming near you in most of these, just watching, do you let him push you around? You seem like the type to reluctantly do what he tells you for the sake of moral justice.

Jack Crawford is not the only person looming around you either, everyone else avoids you like the plague, but one fair skinned, tall, elegantly dressed older man is also often around you.

Uh Will, who the fuck is this?

A Day Together.

Chapter Summary

Joe and Will spend a day together, then Joe pays a visit to his (totally) future house.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

I click for the next photo and there he is again, one hand in a reassuring gesture, squeezing your shoulder, grounding you, being your paddle.

He is tilting his head towards you, his expression is neutral but his eyes hold this very curious gaze, directed of course towards you. You're completely oblivious to all of this, you're just staring at the ground, letting him help you.

Ah yes, your psychiatrist.

But he isn't quite your psychiatrist, is he? Legally he's just a consultant, so what type of boundaries exist between you two?

In all of the pictures of you two, he's always looking at you in some way, his expression is always controlled but I can see it in his eyes, the signs of a growing obsession.

It's almost jarring looking through pictures of mutilated bodies alongside this nepotistic sixty year old baby hanging around them with his \$3200 handmade Garrison Bespoke suits.

There's not a lot of information on Doctor Hannibal Lecter: he was a surgeon at the Hopkins hospital, then became a psychiatrist, he is very well regarded in the psychiatric community, he holds these exclusive lavish dinners, frequently goes to the opera, donates lots of money to charity, blah blah blah...

There's no information on him from before his time at the Hopkins hospital.

Look Will, I'm going to be frank with you. I don't think anybody in your life at the moment has your best interest in mind, but that's why I have to do this, surely you understand me. I had to search you up so I could see just how badly they treat you. Fortunately, you now have me in your life.

I save some of my favorite candid photos of you before closing the folder, I then look through the forums of Tattlecrime.com and try to decide if I want to laugh or vomit.

[LOG 10/17/2013]

minnesotashriekslut: guys does anyone know where graham cracker lives??

cerealkiller [ADMIN]: posting addresses violates the forum's rules.

minnesotashrikesslut: :(

chesapeakestripper: is the state ok? I only know that

cerealkiller [ADMIN]: listen, anything is free game if you just don't outright state it here.

minnesotashrikesslut: :o

chesapeakestripper: omg @minnesotashrikesslut come in my twt dms rn.

[30 MIN AGO]

willgrahamsglasses: wait ppl is this thread dead?? :((@chesapeakestripper how did u find out abt the state!!

besttattler98: if u look through the candids of may 2nd there's a picture of his house!! just image research the plants, identify the type and where it's from, rule out states that are way too far from Virginia, which is where he teaches, and you will be able to find out his state + general location by roaming a bit around w google earth. I still haven't found the exact address since he lives in the middle of nowhere. n e ways, technically that picture of his house is public info so there is no problem. xx

willgrahamsglasses: omg thx that's actually so useful <33

begaydocrime: guys I feel like this is.. very intrusive. you just gave out a guide on how to find his address. @ADMINS

[10 MIN AGO]

F.L. [ADMIN]: Unfortunately my tattlers, even though this is very smart, it still is risky. @besttattler98, you will not get banned but we will delete your comment in a few minutes. Consider this a light slap on the wrist.

[END LOG]

I wanted to bash my head on my computer repeatedly, but I just copied the instructions and found your house. These people are actually insane, but still very useful. You live in Wolf trap, Virginia. In the middle of nowhere, like a hermit.

Do you feel lonely? Well maybe not, you have six dogs, if the creeps of the forums are correct. I don't mind dogs, that's a topic I'll surely bring up with you.

Speaking of you, I have a proposal. Why don't we spend the day together tomorrow? Just you and me?

Our day starts at the ass-crack of dawn.

I know from the posted schedule on the FBI Academy site that you teach your class at 8:00 am, but of course you wake up early. It's currently 4 am, you don't sleep upstairs which is great because I wouldn't be able to watch you in that case.

You sleep only in a white shirt and boxers.

You wake up drenched in sweat, heaving and crying. By the looks of it, this isn't an irregular thing. It took a lot of strength not to barge in and comfort you, Will. Thank god some of the dogs that were awakened by your cries swarmed you with their wet noses trying to do that on my behalf.

I wonder if it's those gruesome crime scenes that you interact with that cause these nightmares, maybe I can persuade you to quit working with the FBI.

You gradually wake up, go to your bathroom, feed your dogs and drink your coffee while staring out of the window. Thankfully I'm in the woods that are to your left.

You spend more time caring for your dogs than you do with yourself, isn't that curious? Also, turns out the creeps were right, you do have many dogs and they're all adorable. They're seven, not six. So is the little one you're showing more attention to, new? None of them actually notice me though since it's so early that the sun still hasn't come out yet. Them barking at me would've been awfully inconvenient.

Now it's 5:30 so I, reluctantly, leave you to get to my car that is parked very far away and I start driving to the academy so I can get there earlier than you.

Even though I am in my thirties, I know I will have no issues blending in with your students. it's 7:30am, most of them are either too tired, high, or generally do not care enough to point out the weird guy they have never seen before in your lecture.

What I'm hoping for is to not get noticed by you, which will not be easy since we do have a connection, but I've chosen my seat strategically: third row, towards the end of one side, or in other words, just far enough so that i can see you, but not be seen, unless i wish to.

Sitting towards the back of the class would mean a lot of distractions, I wouldn't be able to hear you. Sitting in the front of the class reduces these distractions, but it would put me under your watch.

So the third row, far from your peripheral vision, is the best option. I arrive early, I sit down and do not care if I've taken someone else's spot, no one bothers me either.

You arrive at 7:45 am and start preparing the projector. You're wearing your glasses, beige slacks, a flannel, a dark tie and a gray-ish jacket on top of everything. You don't want to stand out, so you dress accordingly. You look more up-tight than what you looked like when talking to me, or in the comfort of your home.



Did you find comfort in our interaction, Will?

As you turn your back on your students, some of them a row behind me start to whisper.

"Do you think he will show up again?"

"Who? The Guru or the other one?"

"The other one."

"I don't know. He was good-looking."

"Dude! He was probably like, almost fifty!"

"And? He looked rich too."

"Ugh. You're impossible."

I hold back the groan that is building up in my throat. Why would your psychiatrist feel the need to come here personally? How close are you two?

"Oh my god are you guys talking about that man that brought professor Graham food?"

"He did what?"

"Lower your voice."

"He totally did. I saw him in the hallway the other day, he handed professor Graham a tupperware."

"Is he a friend?"

"A friend?"

"I heard he's professor Graham's colleague at the FBI."

"Oooh.. "

Okay, I officially dislike your psychiatrist, Will. He doesn't want the best for you, although to you it may seem so, he's trying to make you be dependent on him by blurring the lines between doctor-patient relationship and friendship, he's manipulating you with his tupperware full of, probably, very gourmet shit. You're a person with simple tastes, I think you would like my cooking more than your psychiatrist's theatrical dishes.

You turn around and get out of your bag the copy of Dante's Paradiso I sold you, you put it on your desk, it's already full of post-its so you must've looked through it to prepare for this lesson.

You probably already knew what pages you would need, you just needed a physical copy on hand. Did you think of me while you skimmed through it? Did you smile as you thought about your interaction with someone who didn't see you the same way everyone else does?

You open it, turn on the projector and the lesson begins.

I have rewatched the snippet of your lesson available on the FBI site a few times, but it isn't at all comparable to hearing you speak for a full hour.

You move like you're not even here, your words transport anyone who's in this class to the crime scene in vivid detail. It's like you're opening a window to your brain, giving everyone in here a glimpse of how your imagination works.

Does this bore you, Will? Do you feel unfulfilled? Do you crave being on the field even though it hurts you?

Everyone is taking notes and hanging by your lips like what you are saying is gospel, it probably is.

I'm taking notes too, to avoid looking suspicious, but I'm so much more focused on the sound of your voice than anything else, Will. It's low, ominous and a slight southern drawl that I hadn't noticed before is perceivable in some of your pronunciation.

How beautiful. Where are you from, Will? Nobody ever talks about it.

But then you go on a tangent, a big tangent about the murderer's motives and emotions and everyone is silent and witnessing you showcasing your empathy.

It pains me to admit this, but it ~~frightens~~ worries me. Will you be able to see through me? And when you do, will you accept my love for you?

Then, just like it started, it ends in silence. Everyone is in awe, not quite sure of what to say, nobody comes up to you to ask questions, they just go away.

I too exit the class, but linger in the hallways as I watch you sat at your desk massaging your forehead with the palm of your hand. Headaches? Is it because of stress? Then your phone beeps, you're startled and you reach down to get it. You frown as you read the text, close the phone, gather your things and leave.

You haven't eaten, as soon as I get close enough with you, I'll bring you food. You're from the south, I presume, maybe I should bring you some jambalaya. You would like some jambalaya better than whatever Doctor Lecter has cooked for you, wouldn't you? It's more homely and simple.

Unfortunately, our day together does have to pause here, since you're going inside of the Baltimore State Hospital for the criminally insane and I cannot enter alongside you.

I watch you from afar in the parking lot, I can see that you're stressed, you don't like this place. You're with your boss, the Guru.

He definitely pressures you to do things, doesn't he? Don't worry, you're going to learn how to say no. Screw your moral justice.

I go home, well, *your* home.

I've seen where you hide your spare key, so it's not a problem for me to enter your house. I open my packed lunch and feed your dogs some pieces of the sausage I had brought along as a peace offering.

I let them lick me, might as well get them comfortable with me in advance.

When I finally come over, officially, they will be all over me and you'll feel inclined to trust me a bit more.

See, Will, you're a bit like a stray dog aren't you? You're lost, you need help, my help. You're asking for it.

Well, I'll bite.

I begin exploring your house.

You have a tv, but you barely use it, it's cold. Your shelves are full of books about fishing, boat motors and there are some classics here and there which I appreciate.

You really like fishing. You even make your own lures, how craftsy.

But you're more than that, aren't you, Will?

I just need to know who you really are, besides a broken fisherman in a house in the middle of nowhere surrounded by dogs.

Where is it, Will? The holder of all secrets. Your laptop.

I start to delicately rummage through your place. Starting at the couch, then searching in and under it. When we live together, your place won't be a pig sty. I'll clean for us.

I stop at a table, where you left dirty tupperware. And you won't eat all this frozen shit or Doctor Lecter's shit. I'll cook for you every day. I promise.

I lift a pair of boxers off the dresser. I hold them tenderly in my hand, then I *pocket them*. I'll even do your laundry.

I run my hands over your carefully crafted lures. I'll go fishing with you and take care of your favorite books.

I look at your unmade bed, hovering, then I check out the dent in the pillow. Gently, i pull back the covers.

I'll make our bed every morning.

Oh, there it is.

And no matter how hard you fight me...

I grab the computer and sit on the bed, opening it up. And sure enough, it blinks right on

...I will always make sure you password protect your devices.

Chapter End Notes

I had way too much fun w the tattlecrime forum part, i am not sorry.
Also yes, Hannibal's suits cost that much, I checked.

He Needs Me, He Needs Me.

Chapter Summary

Joe finally meets Will's friends! Their relationship progresses quite nicely.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

As I sit on your bed while scrolling through your search history, some of your dogs keep their distance only to get, some minutes later, a tiny bit closer to sniff my foot that's dangling of the edge of the bed. They mostly seem excited at the sight of a newcomer, thus indicating not many people stop by to visit you.

What a shame.

The new addition to the pack, I believe based on your extra attention towards him, is still very wary of me, which is fair. It's not like anyone has ever been worthy of his trust, but I will show him just how much I deserve it.

Just like I'll do with you.

My searches unfortunately get interrupted by the loud rumble of the engine of a car, the dogs start all running towards the door while I head upstairs with your laptop.

I look out of the window and I see the head of a woman stepping out of a Mercedes Benz G class, her long brunette hair, which is slightly curled at the bottom, flows in the cold air as the clicks of her heels get closer.

A girlfriend? No, that's highly unlikely.

There are no pictures of her around the house and the mere possibility of you having a friend made your students grin with amusement. Still, she is here and from the sounds of her coos and "aww aren't you a good boy", she's taking care of your dogs.

You care about these dogs more than about yourself, Will, it's clear you wouldn't let just anybody waltz in here and feed them.

So she's close to you, a friend.

You have no pictures of your younger self around the house, just a childhood one with your dad. So of course you aren't the type to peak in highschool and latch onto those friendships desperately, no.

You met her because of work.

And... my suspicions are correct because by going through yet again the FBI Academy site, I see that long brunette hair framing the face of a woman listed as a lecturer, Alana Bloom.

Another psychiatrist, really Will?

Well, I can't blame you all that much. They find your psyche interesting, but I can't imagine you like being friends with someone based on that. No, she's probably very kind and compassionate towards you, that's why you like her.

But when you look into her eyes, you definitely see the pity she feels, the urge she has to reach out and help you when you put your mind at work, but also you see the desire she has for you to let her look at it and fix it, like you're some sort of broken thing. Does it not bother you?

Who am I kidding, of course it does.

But you don't have anyone else.

Alana Bloom has more of an online presence than you, but her profiles are all private since she only does this out of necessity to fit in nicely. She is a well regarded psychiatrist and currently a guest lecturer at Quantico. She went to the same medical school as of-fucking-course Dr Lecter.

Judging by their difference in age I would say that he probably acted as her mentor and remained friends with her throughout the years, then when Jack decided to "borrow your imagination", she wanted for you to have a source of support.

She didn't decide to be it herself, which probably indicates that she has a strong moral compass and found that the clash of interests wouldn't be ethical nor beneficial for you.

So she opted to hand your brain to a dear friend who she respects very much. Something like your frequent nightmares, headaches and lack of care for yourself tells me that her friend isn't doing that good of a job.

I wait for her to leave so I can descend down the stairs and it doesn't take her all that much. She's close to you, possibly the closest friend you have, but still she isn't someone who would make herself comfortable or stay here, she knows you like being alone.

Or that's what you believe you like since everyone in your life hasn't shown themselves to care for you as a person. There's a reason why you live here, people have disappointed and hurt you, but if you keep your distance, it won't happen again.

I lean down near the new puppy and I offer my hand towards him, he sniffs it and hesitantly lowers his head ever so slightly, but still looks up at me skittishly. He's prepared to back away, people have disappointed and hurt him and if he keeps his distance, it won't happen again.

But he craves affection. I scratch behind his left ear and he melts into my touch slowly, lowering his head and allowing me better access.

You crave affection too, Will. That's why you have dogs, they're a perfect replacement because they love you unconditionally, they're what family is supposed to be.

But who's going to look out for you? Alana? What will happen when an ethical dilemma presents itself and she won't let herself help you? I wouldn't hesitate. You need me.

So I learned three definitive things by scouring your computer, Will.

First, judging by your very few messages on Facebook with your father, you grew up without a mother, she left you. It's a pretty big coincidence that that happened to me, too.

What a great topic for our first date.

Second, even though it's clear you have a lot of shit going on, you still try to be a good professor by answering the few emails your students send you.

Third, your appointments with Doctor Lecter are always at 7:30 pm on Wednesday. That may be useful.

I carefully position your laptop back where I had found it and bid my farewells to your fluff army.

I station myself outside your house and wait for you to get back. When you do, it's almost night time and if it's possible, it looks like your eye bags have gotten even deeper.

You fumble with the keys to your house as your pack scratches the door excitedly. You enter the house, pet your dogs, notice that the home-made dog food Alana microwaved for them has been eaten less than usual and you frown.

Then, as some of them run around you, while others go to their beds, you get out a half-finished bottle of whiskey and down it.

I memorize the brand of whiskey you prefer, bulleit bourbon. Then, you microwave some frozen fish sticks, drink some pills, eat, shower and head to bed.

I stay there for a few minutes while you sleep, just to make sure you're okay. Then, I start walking towards my car.

It's very far away, but it's for safety reasons. As I walk through the sounds of the night, there's something else that doesn't belong with the quiet breeze, but I don't pay much attention to it, I'm also tired, Will.

I get into my car and as I turn on the headlights, the second luckiest thing this week happens to me.



Could it really be? It feels like I'm dreaming. I'm not.

Honestly, Will, at first I thought you were a hallucination, but there you are, in your cheap boxers and worn out tee, standing with a hand over your eyes, shielding yourself from the light of my car.

You're sleepwalking, so let's add that to the list of things your psychiatrist should be helping you with.

I get out of the car and approach you slowly. Then you stumble forward so I put my hands on your shoulders.

The contact makes you blink a few times and you start looking around as if I just snapped you from a trance. Your breathing quickens as you assess your surroundings and I remove my hands from you.

You huff out a small self-deprecating laugh as you look down at my feet. You shake your head while you speak, like you don't quite believe what is even going on.

"Where.. where am I?"

"You're on the Dulles access road."

You close your eyes and pinch the bridge of your nose in irritation. "Right." You don't even seem that surprised, just tired.

How often does this happen? What if some sicko had found you here, Will?

You stumble once again and your eyes widen as you lean forward. Immediately I take a few steps back but you manage to.. vomit on my jacket some of the remnants of your fish sticks mixed with bulleit bourbon.

Fantastic.

"Fuck. Oh god." You lean back and cover your mouth with your hand while you hold up the other one to your forehead, which is sweating. You have a fever. "Fuck, I'm so sorry."

"Whoo.. No, It's fine. I, uh, I hated this jacket anyways."

You close your eyes and try to slow down your breathing. I tilt my head at you with worry in my eyes. I fake my hesitation as I look around us before sighing and pointing to my car. "Where do you live? I can give you a lift home."

You look back at the darkness of the night behind you as you consider my offer. Your feet are probably hurting from walking on the road and you're shaking from the cold of the night. You look around yourself, there's nobody else but us, so you exhale a disappointed sigh.

You blink slowly and frown. "I.." You scrunch up your nose in disgust, as if relying on someone is the last thing you want to do. "Farmlands just outside Quantico, Wolf trap."

I nod and open the door for you, you mumble a quiet thanks. I get inside the car and start driving back towards your house.

"I'm not always like this." You speak up after a moment of silence. I glance at you and you're staring out of the window. Your tone is distant and slightly slurred, I can feel your high temperature from where I'm sat beside you.

"I figured you had some kind of night."

You raise your brows and your lips settle in a sarcastic grin. "Some kind of."

Silence falls once again, I look back at the road and feel your gaze piercing me.

You close your eyes and tilt your head back. You grip the seat, trying to ground yourself. "I'm not even sure if I'm awake now... Don't I know you?" Your tone is quiet, like if you raised your voice suddenly reality would shatter.

You probably feel like you are losing your grip on reality, aren't you? And you don't have anyone, except your psychiatrist, with whom you can talk about this. Just what is going on with you, Will?

I turn my head towards you and wait for you to open your eyes. As you do and glance at me, I adapt a confused expression.

"I don't think I..."

You turn your face fully, your eyes focusing on the top of my cap, and I fake a realization.

"Oh.. you're the.."

You turn your head back to look out the window. You're shielding yourself from me, Will. I get it, you don't know me yet.

"The guy who bought Dante's Paradise, yes."

"How did the lecture go?"

You stay silent. When I glance back at you, your hand resting on your thigh is shaking, you grip it tighter until your knuckles turn white.

Wrong question then.

After a beat, you ask. "Where do *you* live?" And I try to ignore your accusatory tone. You're irritable.

"Arlington County. It's not far from Wolf trap, so it's not really a problem."

I watch as your shoulders relax a tiny bit, you nod silently.

"I grew up in New York. Left for a while to chase a girl, then came here." I say and just like you, I prepare my bait, which is pretty simple compared to yours, but it will work. I attach my line, tie the hook and *wait*.

You turn your head slowly. "You came here?" You say and your tone is soft, you're probably too tired to put up a front at this point. Frankly, it's a bit adorable.

"I'm not a good chaser."

You give me one of your small smiles and it's worth everything I've been doing and will do for you.

"I'm too good at chasing for my own good." You reply, I look over with a puzzled expression. You duck your head sheepishly and mumble a quiet. "Sorry."

Ah yes, your job. "No, it's okay. Is that what keeps you up at night?"

You scoff and turn your head. You reply defensively. "What keeps you up at night, Joe?"

I ponder for a second, then as I look at the roads that are slowly approaching Wolf Trap, I speak. "This guy I know, owns the bookstore actually, once told me all books add up to one essential truth. Which is, if you know enough, life is pretty much unbearable. And what you do know, isn't even all that much."

Silence fills in while my words linger in the air. "And what do you know?" You ask, your tone is less groggy and a bit more awake. You're also cooling down.

"Enough." Not enough. I want to know more about you.

You tilt your head and exhale a shaky laugh. Your eyes crinkle in amusement and for a second, it's like the eye bags aren't even there. "If you didn't, you wouldn't be covered in vomit."

I let out a chuckle myself as I glance at you, raising my eyebrows. "If you didn't, you wouldn't be sleepwalking either, would you?"

You scrunch up your face as your sarcastic grin turns into a slight frown. "What makes you think I know enough?"

"You showed me." I reply quietly. You don't answer and you turn your back on me once again.

Then, you finally take the bait.

"Will. That's my name." You say, ever so softly. You gave me your name under your own conditions, so you're establishing some sort of connection. Well you won't have to worry, I'll make it happen.

"This is me." You point to your house down the road, I slow down and park the car. You look back at me, focusing on the vomit stain on my jacket. You're thinking of a way to repay me, aren't you? I can see you wondering if it is socially acceptable to invite me in for a drink while you purse your lips.

Ask me, c'mon, I know you want to.

You shake your head as if to shake those thoughts away. Aww.. well I was going to say no anyway, so I wouldn't come off as a creep.

"Thanks. For everything." You say as you turn your head fully in my direction.

I nod. "You're welcome, Will." There's something exhilarating about saying your name out loud for the first time only with your permission. It feels special, no, it *is* special. You found me interesting enough and something tells me that that isn't common.

Your eyes reach up to my chin, only for you to look down at my jacket and nod back at me. "Night, Joe." You exit the car.

Here's what I learned this week, Will. You're special. You're talented. You're lonely. And you're smart, except in the ways you're really not.

Like trusting people you shouldn't.

I open my phone and put into the Google search bar: headaches, vomiting, confusion, losing track of time, sensitivity to light, increased irritability and slight fever.

But you can't help trusting someone like your psychiatrist, because you have no one and everyone needs someone. And when you need someone you'll cling onto anyone.

Encephalitis.

You're inside a house fire. Grabbing for anything in a panic. What you really need is someone to save you. From your pushy boss and your "compassionate" friend. From your useless psychiatrist.

I can help, Will. Let me help you.

Chapter End Notes

will wondering if he will see the stag again if he goes back to sleep now
joe: omg he totally wants me to come inside his house

Masquerade.

Chapter Summary

Joe goes to the opera to meet a certain someone.

Chapter Notes

someone should remind me this is supposed to be crack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The first movement opens. The motif reveals itself. D, E-flat, C, B natural. Or just like **he** always insisted in german musical notation: D, Es, C, H.

The initials of the author, Dmitrij Dmitrievič Šostakovič.

The lights flicker on, revealing a dimly lit basement stacked with shipping boxes, cleaning supplies and in the middle of it all a room within the room made of steel and plexiglass, a state-of-the-art safe, a massive cage carefully constructed to house the rarest of books.

A way to protect, a way to *control*.

It's cold. Fifty four degrees and no sound is heard, expect the faintest remnants of Šostakóvič's Tahiti Trot, Op. 16; the cage is soundproof because nothing should ever disturb his reading.

I lovingly run a finger over the lucite-encased spine of the first part of a 18th century edition of Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes, then I linger on the second part. The novel is about a guy who believes in chivalry so he decides to be an old school knight, I liked it.

I cannot hear the faint chirps of the piccolo, nor the triumphant echos of the french horns anymore. What did I do wrong?

The door gets opened and the heat from the outside slowly creeps it's way in.

He is there, I can feel him.

"Look at me, Joseph."

There isn't music anymore, only the sounds of the harsh consonants resounding inside the cage. I turn towards the voice. I can only see him from his left pant leg and up, I try to open my swollen right eye, but it's all futile.

"Have you learned your lesson?"

I shake my head and hope he'll leave me alone.

"Repeat."

The vibration begins in my chest and the sound comes out of my throat as if I've been practicing this same piece my whole life, though It's never good enough.

"Always sixty five degrees at all times. Humidity at 40 percent, if it's too moist the pages can mildew, if it's too dry, they get brittle. Keep books upright so the spines don't become warped or rolled or what we call cocked. We dust the covers once a day with a chemical free duster. Always dust toward the spines, so i don't tear or rip the corners. And under no circumstances is there any sunlight in this room. Sunlight can ruin a book as fast as fire. Faster."

He steps closer. "So what's wrong, Joseph?"

I stop. I go over the score over and over again, I look at each note, each alteration, each leitmotif and then realization dawns on me. "The temperature, it's too cold."

Slowly, he kneels and puts a hand on my shoulder. He smiles. "Why is it important?"

The low rumble in my chest presents itself again as I recite my part. Finally getting it right. "The most valuable things in life are usually the most helpless. So they need people like us to watch over them. Protect them."

That may be one of the few things Mr Mooney actually was correct about. That is why I have to protect you, Will. You are at the hands of those around you and they are all incompetent. No, wait. They aren't incompetent, they're even worse than that. I mean, seriously, what kind of psychiatrist isn't able to recognize a brain inflammation? Or what kind of head of the behavioral unit of the FBI isn't aware of the signs of overworking in an agent? The answer is, they are aware and able, but they simply won't act, for their own interests.

You may be wondering how did I manage to get inside a performance of Šostakovič's string quartet no.8, well Joe Goldberg wouldn't exactly be allowed here. But, Joe Mooney, son of a retired soviet prison guard who frequently attended these performances would be. Tonight, I shall observe this event while wearing a mask, and it looks like I'm not the only one.

Seriously, I don't think I've ever seen a room full of faker people before. Stevenson would have a field day in here. They are all showcasing their brand new façades, all glittery and shimmer to occult their deepest insecurities, secrets and fears. These masks are all easily ripped off thanks to an experienced glance, but one of them persists, because it's purpose is not to hide but to protect. That is why it is wrong calling it a mask, it is a cage instead.

His appearance, his movements and expressions all look painfully memorized. Everything is curated from the lightish brown tips of his hair down to his \$248 Italian dress shoes. It's quite apparent that there's something in need of protection inside of him, or else he wouldn't have manufactured such an immense cage for it. I'm sure you could've seen right through the bars of what it contains, if only of course, your brain wasn't on literal fire. But you're not dumb, Will. I know you also get an off feeling about this guy and he knows that. That's why he brings you the finest meals contained inside a homely tupperware, or why he grabs your shoulder and grounds you while you hover over a new gruesome corpse. He's trying to toy with you. That is what brings me here, sat in the Lyric Baltimore Theatre, attending a masquerade to a C minor key.

I cannot hear the the gravely plucking of the violoncello, nor the sustained whine of the violins anymore. The music has stopped.

He stands up first, all glossy-eyed, clapping enthusiastically and conducting his own subtler performance, one of manipulation of others. Everybody, of course, joins in.



I do have to hand it to your psychiatrist, Will, he is a charmer. As the members of the upper avalanche start conversing and drinking their wines, they all seem to gravitate towards him, there's this undeniable aura of regality around him, it's something sharply elegant yet deadly.

Dr Lecter certainly enjoyed the performance, he had the same look of satiated hunger at the end of any musical feast that Mr Mooney always had; but this of course doesn't mean he also particularly enjoys the company that comes afterwards.

He's there, surrounded by the members of Baltimore's culture elite, holding court as the audience mingles, but he's not doing it because he likes small talk. He's toying with them, pulling strings with his false smiles and carefully directing each interaction to go the way he wishes.

If you pay attention, when something doesn't play out the way he wants, his cage shows it's flaws: a twitch of the upper lip or a small flaring of the nostrils; but the movement is so indiscernible that you aren't even sure if you saw it or if it was a figment of the projection of your feelings on him. He leaves you confused.

An older woman, in her fifties, engages in conversation with Dr Lecter while her husband and the other patrons circle them. She twirls the red lipstick stained glass in her hand as she speaks in a teasing tone. "It's been too long since you've properly cooked for us, Hannibal." *Hannibal*. They're close, but he would never consider her a friend.

"Come over and I will cook for you." He smiles knowingly, tilting slightly his head. For a second, his gaze shifts and he notices someone out of the corner of his eye.

Twitch of the upper lip. Ouch, bad news.

He casually focuses on the older woman as she continues to speak, not having picked up at all on his invisible discomfort. "I said properly. Means dinner and the show." She pauses and addresses the circle of patrons surrounding them, she theatrically moves her glass around to emphasize her point. "Have you seen him cook? It's an entire performance. He used to throw such exquisite dinner parties. You heard me. Used to." Oh, wow. Can cook and will manipulate you? Boyfriend material right here.

Dr Lecter teases her with false grandiosity and a smile that's a tad bit too genuine than usual. "I will again. Once inspiration strikes. I cannot force a feast. A feast must present itself. "

Why do I feel like I'm missing something? Some type of context? He doesn't usually act like this and it's not because of her, so there's something about what he's saying that amuses him. It's like, those friends who have inside jokes and don't let you in. Not cool, doc.

The woman furrows her brows and smirks. "It's a dinner party, not a unicorn." She winks at him playfully, then she sips some of her chardonnay that's making her cheeks flush with color.

He gives not only her, but the patrons surrounding them a warm smile, as he raises his glass in proclamation. "But the feast is life. You put the life in your belly and you live."

The Cultural Elite are charmed and I feel like pinching the bridge of my nose wouldn't be enough to relieve the amount of frustration I am feeling. Really, who says this type of shit? God, this fucker is pretentious.

The older woman notices two men and tries to stifle her annoyance due to them inserting themselves in this interaction and for intruding in the patrons' circles. So she takes a small graceful step back and points to them with a tilt of her head, repressing any type of irritation.

"I believe that young man is trying to get your attention." She says and that's a serious understatement, the shorter man she's gesturing towards isn't only trying to get his attention but is also craving it. He has never gone to any concerto before in his life, it was clear by the way he tried to 'direct' the piece while it played. Judging by the cut of his ill-fitted suit, it's not handmade, so he's of course not part of the upper avalanche, also he isn't a frequenter of this event. This all leads to one conclusion: he is only here for Dr Lecter's validation. He was looking at Dr Lecter like he was some type of puzzle he needs to solve, so he doesn't know your psychiatrist all that well, thus making me also believe he's probably a patient, not a colleague because of the age difference and because this man wouldn't be found within reach of any psychiatrist corner, unless he were the center of the attention of it.

Sat a few rows behind me, were the two men: one was the shorter one who kept looking at Dr Lecter like he was Christ risen, the other who was taller looked like he was so bored he was going to bang his head on the seats and hope the sharp edges would gouge out his own eyes. The two know each other judging by the way the shorter one would mindlessly lean towards the other. The tall one though, was as still as a statue, refusing to acknowledge the existence of the other. He had this cold aura around him, not one of coolness but of frigid cruelty. His neck was adorned by a purple-ish blemish, so he's a violin player. But he didn't enjoy the performance, he looked to be too annoyed by his friend's very loud veneration of the Doctor. The shorter one sure knows how to choose 'em.

Dr Lecter turns, quickly selects the best fitting smile for this type of interaction without betraying their relationship, and shakes the shorter man's hand.

Yep, called it, patient. That smile is a different brand of fake than the previous one, but it has its remnants. Its purpose is to make it so outsiders won't be able to tell how these two are involved.

"Hello." He says and it's perfectly vague! No 'How are you this fine evening', thus propelling further conversation and no 'It's good to see you', thus in some way hinting at their relationship. The tone is playful but neutral, not letting any information transpire. Of course, judging by the subtle slip of the mask from earlier, dear Dr Lecter really doesn't like this guy, he's holding himself back.

The shorter man grins wider, happy with getting, to his eyes, the same type of treatment as Dr Lecter's 'friends'.

"Hi! Nice to see you." Of course he doesn't call him by his first name, the good doctor hasn't given him this privilege yet and frankly, will never give. He motions with his hand towards the taller man.

"This is my friend, Tobias."

Ignoring the side-eye some older people are giving me for being on my phone, I start searching. Tobias, violin, Baltimore.

Tobias budge, string shop worker, there he is. He works as a cello instructor to children and also owns a string shop called Chordophone String Shop. Of course, doesn't have any type of socials, seriously what is up with the people around you and the aversion towards typical 21st century human behavior? Anyways, he is a secluded man, very passionate towards music based on the way

he very slowly relaxed his shoulders during the first movement, because that's definitely a thing he doesn't like doing: letting his guard down. His mask tonight is very simple, it's one that serves to let him watch while also going unnoticed, it almost looks like he's searching for.. something within the crowd.

"Good evening." Dr Lecter says as he turns towards Tobias, shaking his hand in a perfectly practiced yet apparently natural manner. But there's something more, it's not just a handshake, your psychiatrist is trying to assess this person, it looks like he's piecing information together just by looking at him. Of course, his patient must've talked about his friend, Tobias, during some sessions, so there's that but there's something else too, I can't put my finger on it though.

The older woman steps into the conversation and puts a hand on her hip as she speaks. "How do you two know each other?" The shorter man looks up to Dr Lecter, hope spreading all across his face. He's aching to get recognized.

The doctor decides to address the whole circle that is observing their interaction with a tilt of his head and a smile. "There should remain some mystery to my life outside the opera." Never seen someone say 'Its none of your business' in such a posh and theatrical way before.

The smaller man completely ignores the many social cues that if Dr Lecter threw any harder, would certainly hit the man in the face so hard to the point of giving him whiplash. "I'm one of his patients." He says while leaning in and looking at the older woman. He scrunches up his face in a smile to emphasize his point.

Dr Lecter's gaze lingers on his patient's face and.. a small twitch of his left eye is visible for only a few seconds. Then, tackling the potential awkward moment with social aplomb, Dr Lecter turns the subject back to the evening at hand like a director fixing an instrument that is out of tune. "Did you enjoy the performance?" He asks while looking at Tobias.

The shorter man beams nodding enthusiastically, he intercepts "I loved it. Every minute." He's lying, he found it boring and would have preferred watching a Micheal Jackson documentary over it, probably would've actually cried.

Tobias narrows his eyes under his mask and tilts his head while addressing Dr Lecter, it looks like whatever he was searching for, he found it in your psychiatrist.

"His eyes kept wandering. More interested in you than whatever was happening on stage." Oookay... bold. The shorter man's face flushes with embarrassment as he frowns, looking around at the patrons. Tobias expressions never falters, he's wearing the satisfied grin of someone who's found a brand new instrument to play with.

Dr Lecter maintains eye contact with Tobias as he adapts a more serious but still good natured tone. "Don't say too much. You must leave something for us to discuss next week." And that is the overture, the perfect segway for a polite dismissal.

"Franklin, good to see you." He gracefully hustles off his patient with a handshake, then he turns towards Tobias and shakes his hand, but when these two look at each other, the room suddenly feels colder.

"Tobias."

There's something in Dr Lecter's eyes that is best seen as something akin to recognition, maybe even a realization of sorts. Tobias seems to be completely unaware of this, too wrapped up in his own symphony to notice Dr Lecter's ability to rip apart his mask in a matter of seconds. There's something glacially dangerous about this whole situation and I want you to be as far away from it as possible, Will.

Dr Lecter makes a witty remark and the sound of the elite's laughter gets fainter and fainter as i turn around and stare down at the bottom of my chardonnay glass, contemplating how can I insert myself in your life.

You've already taken a step, which is giving me your name and that is in itself something big for you. Now you're waiting for my move.

The thing is, I feel like since you've been wronged so many ways before in the past, that what you really desire is someone persistent, someone who will ignore all of the walls you've built and just stay with you.

I can be that person, but only if you let me.

The good news is: we don't live so far away that if we, causally, ran into each other in a public place it would be weird; the bad news is: you're as reclusive...

I look over to the crowd of the elites, Dr Lecter has left the circle.

...as Doctor Lecter is Sociable. *Fuck*. Where is he?

"It appears I have yet to have had the pleasure of meeting you." I look over my shoulder and there he is. Jesus, Will, this fucker is creepy. He's giving me a very polite smile, probably one he uses as a default expression during these events.

"It appears not. Joe Mooney." I set down my glass on a nearby table and offer my hand for him to shake while maintaining eye contact. Looking into his eyes is like looking into the void, a total abyss without any sign of genuine emotion, just the feeling that something isn't quite right.

He nods silently in understanding after shaking my hand. He switches the current face for one of compassion, his lips turn down ever so slightly in something akin to a frown. "I know of your father, Mr Mooney. I wish you my deepest condolences."

A moment of silence passes. His eyes crinkle in amusement but his tone never waxes away from causal. "He would've loved this night."

"*This* night?"

He takes a sip of his glass and looks over to the crowd as he speaks. "The quartet is a suicide note. The composer had been pressured into joining the communist party and had begun working with even more eyes on him."

The room is cold, sixty five degrees.

"He felt like he had lost all control, he couldn't even protect who was dearest to him."

The most valuable things in life are usually the most helpless. So they need people like us to watch over them. Protect them.

"He came to the realization that he could, and had to, kill who was putting his family in danger. Himself."

The familiar low rumble begins in my chest once again and the words that he had once said tumble out of my throat, burning it as they make their exit before I can stop them. "Some people deserve to die."

I look up and in Dr Lecter's eyes I see it once again, recognition. The same look he had given Tobias. A look of acknowledgement destined towards what lives inside of me. "I must say, how peculiar it is that Mr Mooney had never mentioned you."

"We weren't close."

"What a shame. You two are eerily similar." He says and the sound of harsh russian-accentuated consonants rings in my ears.

Chapter End Notes

hannibal lecter and his favorite hobby: fucking with people's head

It's Worth It.

Chapter Summary

Things spiral out of control and Joe begins to doubt himself.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Learning your psychiatrist's routine wasn't hard, Will, but since today is a wednesday, watching you get out of your car and into his office certainly is.

It's 8:45 pm. You are leaving his office and you wobble around while you fumble with your car keys, to top it all off you're grinning and your cheeks are slightly flushed.

He offered you wine. Probably something not too pricey but still good quality, just like you would like it. Maybe a white vintage from Linden Vineyards in Virginia.

No other patient walked out like this, thus confirming the most obvious thing ever: your psychiatrist is keeping you at bay, making it so you don't truly see him as he is, but unfortunately for him, my brain isn't also on fire.

You leave, he does too after a while. He then heads to his fancy, imposing and costly Rockcliffe Mansion in Baltimore, Maryland.

I follow him from a distance, parking some blocks ahead of him, just right outside his rich-white-privilege polluted area and go back to his Mansion by walking.

It's deadly quiet for hours, then the doors suddenly open. What I didn't really expect is, instead of him standing in a \$2,185 grey Holt Renfrew robe made of cashmere with silk lining, seeing him approach his Bentley at three in the morning wearing... is that an American Psycho costume?

He pops open the trunk and pulls out a, *what the actual fuck*, comically shaped human bag. Now. I don't think your psychiatrist in his late 40s is a very keen cinephile organizing a gathering with his friends on Reddit, but you never know.

He throws the, again, *what the actual fuck*, human body over his shoulder and carries it inside calmly. As soon as the doors close I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding.

This man is a murderer, he is living his best life playing around with the FBI, but most importantly he is fucking with your head. I need to get you as far away from this bullshit as fast as possible.

I pinch my nose in irritation as I start pacing around, because, really Will? How did this happen? I knew there was something off about this man, but murder? And judging by his apparent calmness and his age, he's been doing this for a long time.

So a serial killer then. Just your area of expertise, isn't it? Oh, you have probably held lectures on him and there's a smidge of a possibility he has watched one of them. A possibility he stood there, holding food he was going to feed you, watching you teach your students about what he does on a Wednesday at three am. He probably felt an immeasurable amount of satisfaction hearing you describe him in the most accurate way, without quite realizing who he was. It fueled his ego and made it so he had a brand new fun toy to play with.

He has perfectly inserted himself in your life by being your colleague, your psychiatrist, your friend, your paddle and sometimes the provider of corpses for your job. He is fostering codependency.

i need to exorcise him from you. If I don't help you, Will, you and him will begin to blur and you will no longer understand where do you start and where does he end. He will make you crawl so far up his ass, you won't even be bothered by his nightly activities.

I stop. Breathe in, breathe out. I can do this. I can get you away from him in a manner in which I do not have to go up against a serial killer with twenty years of experience under his belt. All i have to do is be the kind, understanding guy next door who'll make you realize that you have encephalitis and come visit a few times at the hospital, who'll be your only drinking buddy to who you can say anything to, the guy who will make you realize you don't owe anyone anything, that you're enough.

Well, I can be that if i can get away from the guy who is straddling me while placing over my nostrils a handkerchief doused in chloroform.

If I had more time I would roll my eyes. Somebody either didn't practice enough or this is an improvised performance. With the amount of chloroform he's using, it's very probable it will take at least two minutes for me to become unconscious; this tall and slim dude isn't strong enough to hold me for that amount of time. Yeah, this is not going to happen.

I manage to elbow his stomach with all of my strength and send him tumbling away from behind me. I turn around and whip out the hammer I had brought with me, a guy needs to be safe after all, and I lounge at him while pinning him down with my hips. He flips us around and as he tries to get out his weapon, he swats my hammer away. I crash my head against his and manage to get back on top of him. He squirms and his lips move, but I can't hear him, I do not care for what he has to say. He's trying to take me away from you, Will. I put my hands around his neck and press down as hard as I can, my eyes fixate on a spot on his neck. I stare off until I can only feel my quickened heartbeat and his breathing has stopped. Then, I fetch my hammer and bash his head in. *Again, again and again.*

It takes a while for the ringing of your name in my ears to stop. I drop the hammer and as my eyes adapt to the darkness of the night, the disfigured face stares back at me. I swallow the puke that is building up in my throat. He's a black, tall and slim man. I open his collar and there it is, along what my hands have made, a purple-ish blemish. Tobias Budge.

I stand up, follow his footsteps and walk towards a nearby bush. He had brought with him various chemicals and utensils. He was planning to kill Dr Lecter. Suddenly all of the pieces slot in together and I cannot help myself, I vomit all over Tobias' tools.

Two serial killers. One unaware of the other. Tobias thought he had found a new victim for his symphony, a new instrument for him to tune to his liking, but he didn't know your psychiatrist was actually the director. God, and I somehow got strangled along.

I don't even have the time to compose myself because the director himself steps out of his mansion in a perfectly clean suit and gets into his Bentley. I quickly hide with Tobias' corpse behind the bush and watch the Bentley drive away towards, of course, the direction of my car.

I close my eyes and think. I cannot go back to my car because he will see, probably on his way back, a very bloody man who's not part of the cultural elite of Baltimore walking around at three in the morning. I cannot keep hiding behind this bush, because he will be arriving from the opposite direction and will see me. I cannot go on the other side of the bush because that will force me to move the body and he would see the blood. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

I get up and start pacing around again, I could run away towards the opposite direction and pray nobody sees me. But before I can enact my plan, I hear the rumble of a car in the distance. I'm not even sure it's his but it is enough to set me in motion.

I run inside his house.

I quickly make my way through the long corridor framed by imposing dark walls and adorned by animal decor. My eyes dart across all of the rooms trying to find a place to hide; maybe the living room, but it doesn't have anything in which I can hide, not even a fancy big wardrobe from the colonial era, how disappointing. In the kitchen? No, it looks.. meticulously clean, it's a place he visits a lot. My steps echo across the room, then something hits me so hard that I have to stop walking around frantically.

That smell. It's thick and cloying with a sweet-ish iron undertone to it and it's coming from underneath my feet. I look down at the floor and a tile that sticks out stares back at me. I kick it and it opens a passage. I take a deep breath.

What am I even doing? Why am I doing this? I should leave, I shouldn't be here, I should've just ran the opposite way, I sho--

A low-pitched humming that I didn't even realize was there in the background, comes to a halt.

Fuck it. I go down the stairs as they lead me to a pitch black, cold basement resembling a dungeon: sharp instruments, chains strung everywhere in ominous fashion, like a slaughterhouse for pigs. I don't flick the lights on, instead I immediately go into the farthest corner and hide inside a large locker containing various surgical instruments. Oh, right. John Hopkins medical school. This fucker used to be a surgeon.

Suddenly, the thumps of my heartbeat aren't the only sound reverberating inside this freezing murder dungeon and a light flicks on. I watch from the gaps of the locker as your psychiatrist, who I should start calling "your posh serial killer pal", If I do not die that is, waltz in holding a brand new shiny tool.

He stills in the middle of the room and his nostrils flare for a moment.

Fuck.

Just as I think he is going to, as elegant as ever, rip me open, he walks towards his table, turns his back on me and flips the body in a different angle so I can see.



He makes me watch as he begins to cut through this guy's underside of the palate through his cheek. The wet sounds of flesh meeting his blade vibrates around the walls. I stare as blood flows from the man's disfigured face, it forms a small pool that cascades down the table onto the floor. I count the droplets that fall for an eternity before the roaring of my blood in my ears stop.

"I must say." His voice is calm, comforting almost. Like a parent preparing himself to scold his child.

"You left quite a... sloppy gift in my garden. Is this perhaps your first time?" The amusement in his voice is terribly inappropriate. Also, second time actually, asshole.

"It would be terribly.." He inserts his elbow inside the slit he made, manually opening the man's jaw even wider. "..Inconvenient if you decided to go to the authorities." He pauses. "For both of us." He says as he looks down at the pool of blood that has accumulated on the floor.

"You left your fluids all over the place, after all." I can't see his face, but I'm sure it is contorted in a smile, an actual genuine smile that comes from the deepest corner of his cage.

"Although, I am grateful for the.. how shall I put it?" He sets the tool down, cracking his knuckles one by one and tilting his head to the left. "Pest extermination."

He grips the table with both of his hands, leaning forward on it. "So I shall be benevolent." He extends his hand and points up with his index finger. "You may have a head start."

I don't even care that I've been officially branded as a dead man walking, as soon as my legs start to work again, I bolt from the locker as fast as I can up the stairs, I sprint down the hallway, out the door and trip on a random branch in this godforsaken hellhole of a garden. I begin crawling around desperately as if he's right behind me and make a break for it on the streets of the affluent Baltimore towards my car. I get inside and desperately start driving away.

I don't even remember where I was driving, I just find myself parking near a shabby bar and staring off into the night drenched in blood and vomit. I examine my watch, I try to ignore the crack on it as it would only make what has just happened real. It's 5:45 am. I look over to the bar and exhale a deep breath. After taking off my shirt, I zip up the jacket which only has a few droplets of my vomit on it and decide it's good enough for a drink at 5:45 in the morning.

I make my way inside the bar as I mentally slap myself. How did I get here? I'm not the type to drown my troubles with alcohol, I'm the type that deals with them head first.

I sit down at a stool.

No, the real problem is that I'm not sure if I can solve this one and make it out alive. Frankly, I'm beginning to question why am I even in this mess to begin with. Is it worth it?

"Did you.. not wash that since that day?"

I whip my head in your direction.

Oh, *you*.

You with your gray-ish blue eyes that look green in the sunlight. You with your skittish glances and fleeting smiles. You, that is now staring at a vomit spot on my jacket while frowning and.. slightly

sweating. You have a bit of a fever.

I shake my head. "Oh, I, uh. I had a rough night, actually." Rough is an understatement. I would rather say horrendous.

You nod slowly while staring down at the bottom of your empty whiskey glass. "I get it." I stare down at a bead of sweat that trails down your forehead.

"Still having those sleepwalking episodes?"

You close your eyes for a moment and lower your head as you gulp. You exhale, open your eyes and nod silently. After a few moments of silence, you furrow your eyebrows and speak up again, probably thanks to the alcohol loosening your tongue a bit.

"I, I was going to talk to someone about it." Of course, your posh serial killer pal. But I made a mess for him to sort out, so that's why he was probably unavailable to you. Maybe this was.. somewhat worth it.

I glance at the bartender. "Two bulleit bourbons, please."

I look back at you and your lips pull up in a small sarcastic grin. "You're not a whiskey guy." You say, with a hint of playfulness in your slurred tone.

Those words send a shiver down my spine. I decide to answer with honesty since I feel like you need it right now. "Yes, but you are."

You huff out a small laugh from your nose and lean back a bit, looking in my general direction.

I am too tired to dance around this, so I decide to ask it anyway. "Did you go to a doctor for it?"

The moment those words escape my mouth, your grin falls apart. You go back to facing the counter and look at the glass of whiskey as the bartender slides it to you. You pick it up and down it like a shot. You stay silent as you stare off for a few minutes, then you mutter under your breath with a raspy voice. "I did."

"And?"

You scoff and raise your eyebrows defensively. "Nothing."

As if acting on instinct, I immediately reply "You should try again." You know, like a dumbass.

You put down your glass and furrow your brows in confusion as you turn your head towards me. "...I'm sorry?" Your tone is soft, like you're not quite believing what I'm saying.

"Oh." Real genius, am I right?

"Uh. My ex, she had a brain inflammation. The first scan she did turned out clean, but her symptoms just kept getting worse so we went to get a second opinion." As I try my best to save my ass, I feel your eyes studying me, gazing into the threads of the story I'm weaving.

You narrow your eyes. "..You're lying, Joe."

The moment you say that, your eyes widen and you purse your lips, as if that could take back the words you just uttered. Then you look down at your whiskey glass accusingly. You shake your head and your frown deepens. You sigh. "Fuck. No. I'm sorry, I don't think you're lying, ignore that."

No, that is part of the problem. You do think I'm lying, in fact you are sure of it. I should find this terrifying, a part of me does, but I can't help the exhilarating rush I feel everytime you recognize a part of me and don't run away. It's addicting.

Your gaze falls on my untouched whiskey glass. I can almost visualize you slowly going down towards a self-deprecating spiral while you scold yourself for not keeping your mouth shut. I slowly extend my hand, hovering near your shoulder but I stop because your shoulders tense up.

You pinch the bridge of your nose in irritation. "You're right. I should get a second opinion."

You tilt your head back, exhale and lean forward towards me. You steal my glass as your arm brushes near my chest. I feel my cheeks flush while I try my best to stand perfectly still against your touch. You immediately gulp my glass down and hiss. As you put it down on the counter, a small wicked grin forms on your face.

You raise your eyebrows sarcastically. "I guess you'll see it on the news." You spit out those words in a harsh and gruff voice. God, those words. They're full of venom, defensive venom you have created to shield yourselves from others and it burns, it burns bad. It burns because you have been burnt, it burns those who are not worthy and will give up the second it flares their skin. But I won't, I will persist, I will persist until I'll show you how much you need me.

Oh and *it's worth it*.

Chapter End Notes

"A potential serial killer, who is getting stalked by another potential serial killer, is stalking an actual serial killer" sounds like a tongue twister for foreigners who have trouble with pronouncing the R's in english

Finding You.

Chapter Summary

Joe engages in chronically online discourse.

Chapter Notes

The Tattlecrime forums return! Can you guess who @primavera is lol?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When you said I was going to see it on the news, you weren't lying at all. You know how much Freddie Lounds loves a good scoop, even better if it helps her degrade the FBI.

Tattlecrime.com would, of course, be one of the first sites to cover your admission in a hospital. So I've been visiting that flashy eye-grabbing site every once and a while for these past few weeks.

I must admit that it has.. almost.. become a guilty pleasure. They do get some very good shots of you and your ass too. I wonder if that's something required for every shoot or is it just the artist's vision? Probably both, since it seems you've gathered quite a bit of a fan club in these forums.

They love all of the sweaty meltdowns you get from mentally straining yourself by empathizing with the most dreadful crimes committed by humanity. Freddie Lounds, though, she hates you, but you're profitable so she'll keep harassing you as long as you'll keep getting stringed along the FBI. Something should be done about that, maybe I should pay her a visit. ~~Ask if she has any candid of you on hand.~~

Just so I could be able to enjoy certain privileges, I signed up to Tattlecrime.com's newsletter. I'm doing this primarily so I can know if you will actually go to a hospital. No ulterior motives. The pictures of you are just a bonus, a little treat for taking such good care of you. Who knows what would've happened if I hadn't, at least, put the thought of going back to get a second opinion in your head?

Although sometimes, while on my lunch break, I do like to participate in some discussions, too. But just so I can laugh at their delusions, I don't take it seriously. If my life were ever to be reduced to arguing with edgy sixteen year olds on true crime forums, then I'd walk up to your psychiatrist's door step and ask him to maul me directly.

Speaking of him, he hasn't made any type of move. To be honest, it doesn't really surprise me. Really, how could a total neat freak like him, who wears a plastic suit, over an Armani suit, while murdering, be okay with killing me without any type of grandiose plan? It would be inelegant.

Although, I do feel like I've made him furious. I mean, what could anger more a controlling maniac other than two situations that were completely out of his control? He hadn't been aware of mine nor Tobias' presence, not up until I, accidentally, handed over to him the upper hand by running into his house and vomiting in his garden. Hey, maybe I've redeemed myself a bit for that.

But there's one thing that's really comforting me and that's you, Will. He doesn't know that you're who I am after and that gives me the advantage to play whatever game he wants to play with him, without him quite knowing what the prize is.

Like I said, I can tell, in his eyes slowly there is something twisted and contorted growing. It's an obsession, but it hasn't quite blossomed yet. He isn't fully aware of how much he craves you just yet and that's perfect. He may win whatever mind games he wants, but I'll get to you first.

That's why I feel calm, even though he's been silently dangling the "I'll give you a headstart" over my head. It'll take him a while to come up with a perfect clean-cut execution plan and in the meantime, I can work on you.

But.. where are you? I'm starting to feel uneasy and I'm not the only one. Your fan club is also getting pretty riled up.

[LOG: 12/11/2013]

grahamcracker101: guys what's up w the no will graham updates? ;((

minnesotashriekslut: right!! we haven't heard from willy g in a while. anyone in the area who knows anything??

cerealkiller **[ADMIN]**: an anonymous source says that Will Graham was last seen in a small bar. we don't have any pictures so we couldn't really publish anything.

primavera: How peculiar. Usually Will isn't the type to engage in such activities as drinking in bars, because that would require him to be sociable. Did the source state if they had seen Will engaging in conversation with any client at the establishment? That would discredit the idea of this person being Will in primis.

(YOU) donquixote: Or maybe, just maybe, Will decided that getting a drink with someone would be nice. He's allowed to make friends.

cerealkiller **[ADMIN]**: oh, hi @primavera, haven't heard from you in a while. our sources said that they saw him responding rudely to someone and just leaving abruptly.

grahamcracker101: classic will xD

primavera: That does sound more like Will. Although it is strange he has decided to visit such a place. Wouldn't he be more inclined to ask for Dr Lecter's help?

begaydocrime: wait guys I'm new, who's Dr Lecter???

(YOU) donquixote: Will's psychiatrist.

primavera: Will's friend.

(YOU) donquixote: Isn't Dr Lecter a very successful psychiatrist? Maybe he was busy.

primavera: One must always make themselves available for friends when they are in times of crisis.

(YOU) donquixote: Maybe Will doesn't see Dr Lecter as a friend.

grahamcracker101: LOL

willgrahamsglasses: HELP???

begaydocrime: well I wouldn't say.. that..

angelmakersbf: omg the girlies are fighting

minnesotashrikesslut: omfg i didn't expect the new guy to turn out to be a hannigram anti
@chesapeakestripper GIRLLLL

chesapeakestripper: oh c'mon **@donquixote**, have you seen that one shoot back from september??
will was giving dr lecter puppy dog eyes!!!!

primavera: I find myself to be in agreement with **@chesapeakestripper**. Will, at least, thinks of Dr Lecter as a figure of stability and comfort in his life.

besttattler98: **@donquixote**, it's best not to annoy the veterans, k? xx

[END LOG]

Screw these idiots with their savior complexes and their serial killers flower crown edits.

Who do they think they are? They do not know anything about you, they do not see you almost everyday, they don't know you like I do. They haven't talked to you, you haven't even blessed them with your name.

I know who I am, I am the one. I've been going to your lectures, up until recently where you suddenly disappeared, but I've been seeing you. I know you in your most intimate and vulnerable moments. I've seen you silently cry bent over the sink of your bathroom. I know what your boxers, what your sweat stained shirts, what your saliva tinted whiskey glass and what your dog-hair infected winter coat all *feel* like. I've talked to you and you gave me your name. They are nothing compared to **me**.

Yes, you've suddenly dissappeared, but it's not because you went to your psychiatrist, right? You wouldn't do that. No. I know you think he's been helping you, but he hasn't, surely you must see that after our nice chat. You have to suspect something, Will, you're smart.

Oh, but you let yourself get pushed around so much. Maybe I should start calling all the hospitals in the proximity of Wolf Trap and see for myself if you've listened to me. Maybe I should stalk your coworker, Alana, bump into her, get her phone and see if you've texted her. If you went to the hospital, you would obviously tell her to look after your dogs and they've been looked after, I can tell by their filled up bowls. But is it you doing it and leaving just before I can catch you, or is it Alana? Or is it someone else you hired and me bumping into Alana would be completely useless?

Please, Will. I need a sign. I need something.

...

Ah fuck it, stalking Alana it is then.

Just as I begin to search the internet for her address, I get a notification from Tattlecrime.com and feel the biggest wave of relief wash over all of my anxieties.

[NEW ARTICLE]

FBI'S PERSONAL HOUND DOG HAS ENCEPHALITIS! I S THIS HOW YOU PLAN TO PROTECT US? (W ITH EXCLUSIVE PICTURES!)

*Finally, Will Graham has been recognized as the unstable individual that he is. Will the FBI finally stop using the mind of a madman to protect us? Or will the head of the behavioral unit, Jack Crawford... **READ MORE***



I feel like I'm on cloud nine. No stalking your coworker, I just have to find the hospital you're staying at, well since you probably want to see me.

No. You *obviously* want to see me because you decided to listen to me. You went to a hospital, so you actually heard and considered what I said, you thought about me and our interactions.

Did you also notice the way we fall so easy into conversation? And not those idle chit-chats, but those raw and crude interactions that stick with you forever. That type of person is the type you should never lose sight of and I know you understand that. You don't have friends and that also makes these interactions even more valuable to you, doesn't it?

You don't need to worry Will, you won't lose sight of me. I'll arrange that for you.

But I have to admit, this whole article is a dehumanizing setup. They are completely ignoring your rights and calling you a "hound dog". That censor bar is truly doing wonders, accompanied by your literal brain scan. Who let this woman inside the hospital?

You shouldn't be treated like this, Will. Nobody should be able to ogle at you like a spectacle.
~~Except for me.~~

Picture saved.

..Anyways. I only have to wait half an hour for all hell to break loose on the Tattlecrime.com forums.

[LOG: 13/11/2013]

chesapeakestripper: he WHAT **@minnesotashriekesslut**

minnesotashriekesslut: what the fuck omg

grahamcracker101: how did dr lecter not notice anything??? what: :((

minnesotashriekesslut: forget Dr Lecter, what about the FBI? They should've noticed too, they have known Will for longer!!!

begaydocrime: well, let's not forget the fbi is incompetent :/ just think abt the zodiac killer

primavera: I find myself in agreement with **@begaydocrime**. Especially if we consider the fact that Jack Crawford kept on pressuring Will, while being very aware of his derailing mental state. Dr Lecter hasn't known Will for a long time, and as a psychology major, i believe it is possible Dr Lecter was evaluating whether Will was suffering from a mental or a physical type of illness before deciding to officially diagnose anything.

ripmeapart: hey I'm majoring in psychology and **@primavera**, is it not fairly easy to distinguish those twos with the CDT (clock-drawing test)?

primavera: Not when you have known your patient for a very short amount of time and said patient is regarded as a generally unstable man overall. It would be difficult to distinguish what is normally his behavior and what is abnormal. Also, it seems from the photos of the reports that this is a very early stage of the inflammation and the CDT lacks sensitivity for the diagnosis of early or mild brain inflammation or dementia.

besttattler98: as always you come through w the best explanations!! lol, u should totes make a blog luv <3

ripmeapart: yeah, do you have any socials? my professor didn't mention that bit about the CDT!

primavera: I am very sorry to disappoint you all. I do not plan on making any sorts of blogs any time soon, nor do I utilize any other forms of socials.

willgrahamsglasses: I love u **@primavera**, but can we talk abt how cute Will looks??

primavera: Absolutely. He looks quite delicious, if I may say so.

(YOU) donquixote: This is a gross invasion of privacy.

chesapeakestripper: you are literally on here too???? lmao

minnesotashrieksslut: leave then. nobody want you here you, lit major

besttattler98: a bit hypocritical aren't u **@donquixote**

primavera: I believe your stay here is no longer desired by the community, **@donquixote** . It would be best for yourself if you were to log off for a while. Maybe meditate, listen to the sounds of the birds chirping; point out in the room you're in three things you can smell, hear and see. Maybe even save Dulcinea while you're at it. Then, you may consider to log back in, if you still desire to do so.

ripmeapart: never seen someone say "fuck off" in such a therapist way before

grahamcracker101: LMAOO GET THEM **@primavera**

cerealkiller **[ADMIN]**: guys.. let's not scare off the new comers c'mon.

willgrahamsglasses: wait **@ADMINS** is is an invasion of privacy if I ask what hospital is Will in? : (

F.L. **[ADMIN]**: Yes.

ripmeapart: message me on tumblr, my mom works there. **@willgrahamsglasses**

I refuse to be bullied around by a bunch of young women who have wet dreams about Martin Whitly. These people don't understand fully what's going on and you know what? That is actually a good thing. I am very lucky these people aren't smart enough to even change their handles on multiple platforms, It's so easy to find them that it almost feels like cheating.

It feels like if Mr Utterson decided to read Dr Lanyon's letter the moment he received it. And well, hello there Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Ergo, Rebecca Moore and **@ripmeapart**.

Rebecca, ten years ago, used to love Tumblr. She was obsessed with any tv show with two male leads with whom the producers, very carefully, tiptoed around a "will they won't they" scenario. Although she slowly started to descend a new type of rabbit hole, one of ASMR videos that narrate a new school shooting every week.

She knew that that type of community wasn't beloved by all of her other mutuals and friends, so she created a second account. Just like Dr Jekyll drank the concoction for the first time, giving birth to

Mr Hyde, so did she, giving birth to @ripmeapart.

Slowly, it seems she has forgotten about her benevolent side, ergo main blog, on tumblr. (This is apparent by the fact that her last repost is a 2014 mormor edit.) Unfortunately for her, it is still following her main one that engages in the true crime community. Thus, making it very easy to track down her real name.

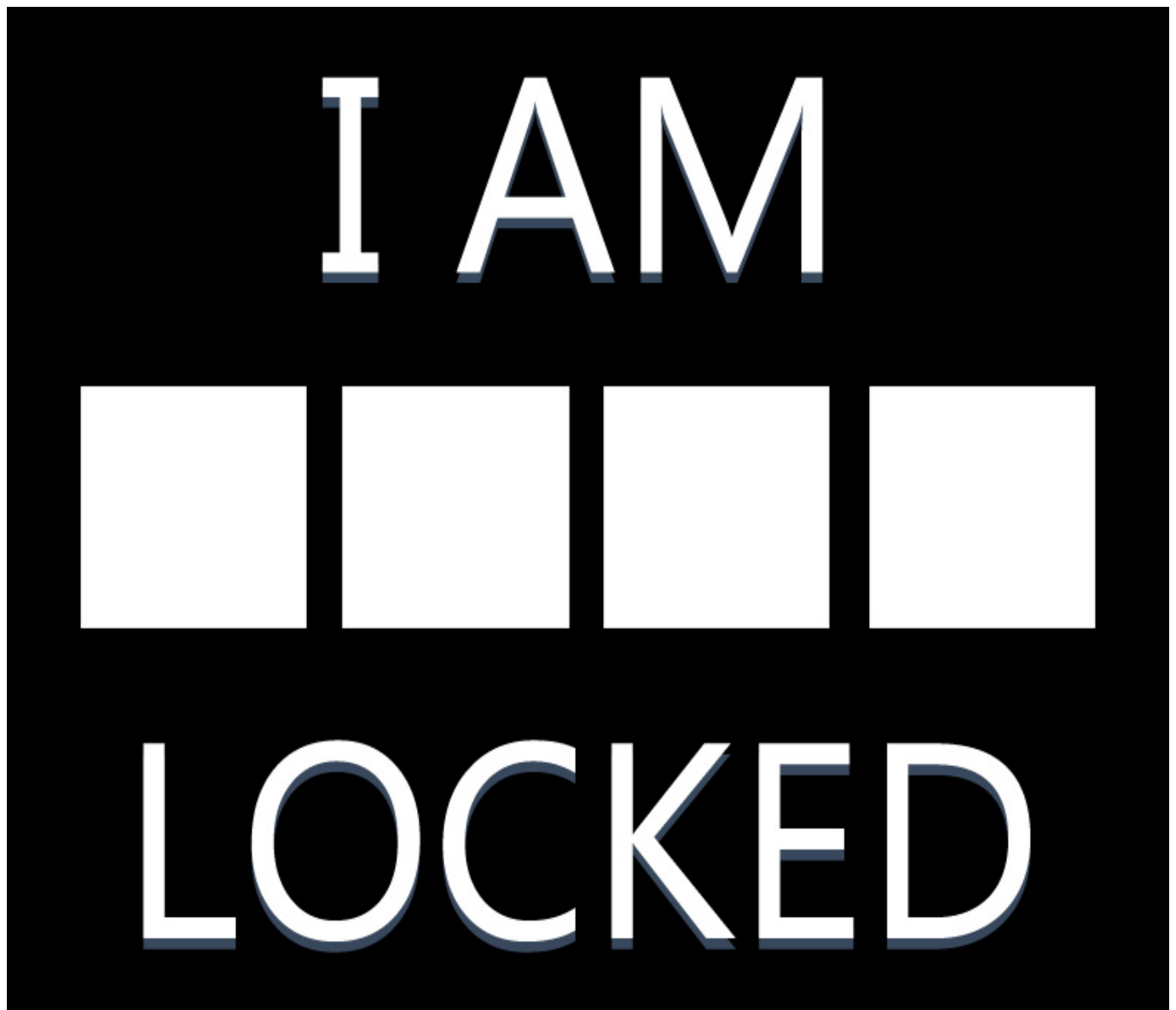
While @ripmeapart has decided to stay and lurk around Tumblr, just like Mr Hyde only ever hangs around in the shadows of East End London. So did Rebecca Moore by moving on to Instagram and Twitter, where she plays out her girl next-door bookworm fantasy; just like Dr Jekyll got to live out his respectable doctor façade in the rich velvety spaces of West End London.

Rebecca craves attention, but she wants it from many sides at the same time. Just like Dr Jekyll was fueled by scientific curiosity. She's pretty big both on Instagram, twitter and her true crime account on Tumblr, although it does have a bit less followers. She wants to appear as the free spirit she believes she is, while indulging in true crime extravaganza. She can't let go of the side she won't show anyone else, so she just let's it enter through the back door and hopes nobody will ever see it.

Thanks to her many tweets, I figured out the general area in which she lives, then because she decided to tell a bunch of strangers obsessed with serial killers online what she's majoring in, I located her college. She decided to complain about the distance between her college and her dorm in a tweet, thus making it very easy to identify her dorm room. I guess Dr Jekyll was much more elegant, but maybe if he had Twitter, Mr Utterson would've been able to get to the truth much more easily.

It only took for me to bump into her randomly and a quick apology to get her phone. Of course, she will get a new one, but won't deactivate the previous one

No one ever does.



Huh. At least all of those true crime documentaries weren't completely useless. I go over all of the information I have on her, run it over and over in my head multiple times. Four digits. What could it be? What would be so important to Rebecca Moore, yet hidden from anyone else?

Of course, that would be her other half, @ripmeapart, wouldn't it? Her obsessions and interactions with such a niche community are secretive enough to be a good password, yet so monumental that she would remember it.

4 digits.

Or maybe it's the root of her essence and not the consequences that have branched from it. Maybe, just maybe.. in the core of her person, she knows she's still that young girl mindlessly wondering on the internet. Maybe she knows that her twisted interest comes from a place of shattered loss of innocence, maybe she craves that time where everything was more simple.

I try "S H E R"

It unlocks and I have the inexplicable urge to throw the phone on the ground out of pure frustration and joy. I easily navigate her phone, go on her Tumblr, check her messages and then find out,

finally, what hospital you're staying at.

I keep the phone with me, but I'll get rid of it later on. Chuck it inside a river or something, I really am not the type to stick around and find out like Dr Lanyon. I have much more important matters to attend to.

Chapter End Notes

Very cracky chapter, a more juicy one will be coming soon

Sacred.

Chapter Summary

Joe visits Will in the hospital like the perfect boyfriend material that he is.

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the comments, I cherish every single one of them. Here's the next chapter, a bit late but juicy nonetheless. <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tap, tap, tap. A blonde woman's nails emit a tapping noise as she mindlessly stares off at her computer.

I walk up to the main desk and put on my best worried-relative face as I gently lay my hands on the edge of the desk. I sigh loudly and the tapping stops.

The woman's brain suddenly turns off auto-pilot, she glares at me raising a silent eyebrow in question.

I ask with a gruff voice. "Could I see my cousin, please? His name is Will Graham and he's in room 708. I've been waiting here since 9:30 am." Which of course, is a lie. It's unlikely she will know, judging by the layout of her belongings on her desk, her shift has just started.

She purses her lips as she looks down at the digital clock on her desk and then back at my face. My face, that is ridden with eye bags. That's one thing that isn't all for show, Will.

I've been thinking. The promise of something more from you is exhilarating, but at the same time it shakes me to my core. I have never felt like this before, not even Candace made me feel as if my own existence relied only on her, as if every single thing that came from her and was directed at me was a gift, something sacred.

The rational side of me says that you'll be my undoing, while my heart-beats follow a crescendo as I approach your room, 708.

I stand outside and look down at the container I brought with me. Jambalaya, just like I promised you. Celery, onion and green bell pepper, jalapeño, which is great since it seems that consumption of curcumin and spicy food may attenuate immune hyperactivity, also a bit of garlic, creole, bay leaf, thyme, chicken, shrimp, crushed tomatoes, fresh okra and sadly no rice, because I did do my research and it really wouldn't be good for a patient recovering from encephalitis.

Breathe in, breathe out. I knock two times and after a heavy silence, I open the door.

Oh, there you are. The image of you at your most vulnerable pins me down to these sickly white hospital tiles. I look over your face at peace, without it's lines and creases, your stubble that's slightly growing out, pale skin that matches your hospital gown and I have the deepest urge to take, to ravish you completely. I gently put down the container on top of a small table.

I feel the heavy weight of my desire gather itself as I approach the bed silently, I can't help but notice how my breathing has quickened. I slightly tilt my head to match yours while I crouch down. I can't help but feel so righteous, so privileged to be able to see you in this state. The time when you will show me this beautiful vision voluntarily will come. Yes, this will be what I am going to see every morning, your face.

~~My hand reaches down.~~

I study all of the small details of it, your face, oh your face. I focus on your eyebrows by examining the small gaps of hair that go unnoticed, I count your eyelashes, stare at the small mole on your left cheek, I take in the bit of dried drool that's cascading down from your lips and I gently lay my eyes on them as if I could kiss them. No, I will kiss them. I'll kiss them because you will realize that you want me just as how much you need me. I focus on your chest and it's tranquil movements. You love me, Will. You just don't know it yet.

I feel an intense, tightening and tingling sensation as I look again at your lips and I imagine them mouthing my name while you are in this gorgeous defenseless state. Will, I deserve this. I deserve you, I deserve to be able to-- You unconsciously furrow your brows and open your mouth ever so slightly. ***Oh, Will.***

It all happens spontaneously. The heavy weight suddenly unfolds itself starting at the base of my spine, passing right through, forcing me to close my eyes. The utopic feeling of release lingers around me as I feel my muscles twitching and my mouth opening in silent bliss. Everything slows down as I just stand there, kneeling Infront of your bed, venerating you. I slowly lean forward and put my head on top of the mattress, looking up at you. I study your hand, the callouses you got from working on boats and from picking your skin during moments of stress. I stay there, admiring each detail with the utmost care for what feels like hours. I can only hear my quickened breathing as I reluctantly lift my head and look down at the mess I've made. I sigh, get up, clean the floor, go to the bathroom and clean myself.

A few minutes pass, then I hear the rustling of sheets over the noise of running tap water. I slowly emerge from the bathroom to find you sitting up looking delightfully confused.

You slowly turn your head towards me, you blink a few times and try to speak but no sound comes out. You frown. Immediately I give you my thermos so you can drink water; you look at it and skittishly try to push it away from your face as you glance back at me with a disoriented expression. I nudge it towards you gently while offering an awkward smile, you hesitantly decide the thermos is innocuous and drink from it.

As you close your eyes and lean your head back, I watch your adam's apple bob up and down. I speak in a gentle voice: "A friend of mine who's mother works here mentioned you. Decided to give you a visit."

You give me my thermos back, you try to shake your head incredulously at my lie but immediately abort the movement and wince from the pain. I refrain myself from touching your thigh in a reassuring gesture. You sigh and very sluggishly lean your head back on the pillow while staring at

the ceiling. "You were right." You say, your tone is slurred, slow and your voice is hoarse. There are still drugs present in your system.

I watch silently as your eyebrows furrow and your gaze falls on the top of my head. I can see your brain trying to work out why I lied, how was i so sure of the brain inflammation and what am I even doing here. What are you going to do now, Will? Are you going to push me away? I feel like, at this point, I wouldn't be able to bear it. I'm not sure I would let you go so easily, each second that passes I'm more sure that there is no one who will be able to know me like you could. I would look into the faces of passerbys and I would feel relieved, but also suffer as I watched them look right trough me and not see me.

Then you turn your head fully towards me, close your eyes, inhale slowly and a small wary smile spreads on your face as you open them again. "Jambalaya?" You ask with a hint of amusement and suspicion that is enough to make me grin.

"Yes." I say as I lean back towards the table and get the container. I offer it to you but you don't take it from my hand, you just look down at it intensely, so I start to speak: "I accidentally made too mu--" but get interrupted by you silently raising an eyebrow in question and making eye contact with me. Your expression is serious and your gray-ish blue eyes bore into mine, daring me to try and deceive you. ".. I made it for you."



You.. are amazing. You make me feel so exposed and I loathe it so much because I fear that it will take you away from me. Yet everytime my intentions get revealed for what they are..

You take the container from my hands quietly murmuring a "Thanks".

..everytime that happens, you stay. What did I do to deserve you, Will?

"No rice?" You ask, your voice a soft whisper that forces me to lean a bit forward. "No rice. Research says it's bad for patients recovering from an autoimmune disease." I give you a fork, you slowly begin to eat. After a few bites, you close your eyes and exhale a tired sigh, then you nod in appreciation. "This is good."

You turn your head to look at the window as you quietly eat, staring intensely at the bits of chicken, as if they've personally wronged you. I decide to give you space and start counting the tiles on the floor. You are trying to guard yourself, but it's very clear that you're not only physically vulnerable but also emotionally so. It's never easy to expose ourselves in such a way, but hey, lucky for you, emotional comfort and patience are my thing. I'll give you how much silence and jambalaya you want, I just ~~want~~ need you to stay with me.

Then, you speak up, interrupting my thoughts. "Why are you here?" I look up to find you still aren't facing me, as if you don't truly want to know the reason why. Even if you're drugged up like this, I can tell you're slowly piecing things together. Maybe you're even getting closer to the truth about your psychiatrist. You really need honesty, a true source of stability right now, so I answer as best as I can. "I wanted to see you."

You huff out a small laugh and I watch as your shoulders tense up. "I vomited on you."

"I know."

Silence falls between us as you continue to eat hastily for many minutes, every now and then you glance at me, as if you're making sure I'm still there; then you wordlessly turn around and give me the container. I put my hand on it, but you don't let it go. I look up to your face and it's contorted in a pained expression. I notice your chest is rising and falling at an elevated rate, your bangs are slick with the sweat that's forming on your forehead, your pupils are slightly dilated because of the effects of the drugs, your brows are furrowed and you're squinting your eyes at me. It hurts me to see you like this, I want to make it all okay, I want for your expression to go back to that blissful calm. You open your mouth but no sound comes out, then you gulp and try again. Your voice is shaken and breaks off at the end of the sentence: "I don't think I know what's real anymore."

I bob my head in a silent acknowledgement, then, after a moment, I start taking deep breaths, in and out. You slowly begin imitating me as I hold the container firm in my hands, as if it were a literal paddle for both of us; our hands are mere inches from each other. I wait until you begin breathing by yourself to speak in a firm tone.

"I am real."

You close your eyes and nod languidly, taking in what I just said. I look down at our hands both on the container and try to suppress the urge to reach out and touch yours. Your hands hesitantly leave the container and rest on top of the white sheets of the hospital. You exhale a shaky breath and slowly open your eyes again and focus on my neckline. You open your mouth to speak, but then decide not to. Your gaze falls on the floor tiles as you enter your own little world of thoughts.

"I'll visit again. You should sleep now." I say, and your eyes runs up my neck and stop at my nose. You slowly stop frowning, your face too tired to keep that constantly worried expression, then I add: "I'll bring you a book, any book you want."

You turn your body away from me and stare up at the ceiling in an inaudible contemplation. Minutes pass and I wait. I'll wait forever for you.

Your eyes narrow for just a second and then you close them. "Count of Montecristo."

I gaze at your profile for a few moments, focus on how the sun slightly caresses your nose, before taking my leave. The count of Montecristo, a tale revolving around the theme of articulated revenge, one of my childhood favorites and one of Mr Mooney's too. Sometimes being locked up wasn't all that bad, the elaborate twists and turns elegantly developed by Alexandre Dumas kept me alive in those moments. Those and the hope for reckoning, justice and vengeance. Which did come about eventually, I believe, as I think about the nice little house in New York where a paralyzed Mr Mooney is staying at.

"Mr Mooney." A carefully bland voice cuts through my thoughts sharply, I immediately stop walking even though my brain is screaming at me to run away. Seriously, how does your psychiatrist keep creeping up on me? I turn towards him and give him a polite smile. "Dr Lecter." I say as I try to glance around myself through my peripheral vision to assert if there would be any eye-witnesses to him gutting me right here. He notices that, because of course he does, and his eyes unnoticeably crinkle up in something akin to amusement.

He tilts his head at the half-empty container in my hands and quirks his lips up imperceptibly as he asks: "Have you come to visit a loved one?" I nod and raise my eyebrows at his own container, with a sort of chicken soup inside. "So have you, Doctor?" My eyes never leave the container as I speak, I try to suppress a smug grin at the thought of me getting to visit you before him. Getting to *feed* you before him. It's reasonable to believe the FBI has been notified of your stay at the hospital and since he was the one who was supposed to be caring for your fired-up brain, so has he. I imagine The Guru must be pretty upset at the doctor for not telling him about your derailing, not only mental, but also physical now, state and so are you at him for manipulating you. I take a deep stabilizing breath, reminding myself that I have the upper hand now.

His smile turns from the creepy sphinx-like espression he wears to something twistedly more genuine as he narrows his eyes. "Yes." His grip on the container indiscernibly tightens. He gracefully lifts ever so slightly up the container and speaks in a poised manner. "Silkie chicken in a broth. A black-bone bird prized in China for its medicinal values since the 7th century. Wolfberries, ginseng, ginger, red dates and star anise."

Show off. I mutter a hushed, totally genuine, "Impressive". I look at my surroundings as I try to find an excuse to get away. Before I could in any way dance around this whole interaction, his face doesn't immediately slot back to the 'presentable façade', but that authentic expression from before lingers as he speaks, lowering his voice and forcing me to focus my whole attention on him. "You left quite abruptly, I might say."

I feel a shiver run down my spine but suppress it, taking my stand and tilting my head up. "Just had some business to attend to."

He raises his, (non-existent?), eyebrows up a bit, with an acidic irritation coloring his normally blank expression. "Ah, of course. Me too. In fact, your little incident kept me fairly preoccupied."

He speaks and from his tone, you really wouldn't be able to tell how much he wants to snap my neck at the moment.

"My apologies." ...Nope, I don't really have the upper hand here.

"Well it was not that big of a problem. I believe you'll find I'm often generous with my house guests, even the uninvited ones." He swiftly takes a card out of his \$3200 suit's front pocket and offers it to me with the elegance of a rehearsed movement. "Mr Mooney." He says, his voice dropping a tone. "I believe your father has told you what my occupation is, yes?"

"Of course." I stare at the card in his hand, not moving, and I feel a bead of sweat trail down my forehead.

"Then I believe it would be best if you were to take up my offer of a first session free of charge." He takes a step forward. "It would be beneficial to your situation." Ah, blackmail. How tasteful.

I take his card and watch as he moves past me to go to your room. I fish out from my pockets my phone and mentally curse myself because of my shaky hands. No, I can do this. He may have blackmail on me, but I have your favor and that's enough to keep me going. I doubt you appreciate the mind games that he has been playing with you, but the nice awkward guy who's just been looking out for you? How could you not cling to me in a time in your life where it seems everyone is lying to you? Your psychiatrist isn't fit to be your paddle, I am. You aren't going to eat his food, since you're already full of mine; I doubt his weird ancient soup is even that good. I type in Google 'Silkie chicken in a broth'.

"This ancient chinese dish contains ingredients such as ginseng and ginger, which stimulate the immune system. For patients who are affected by autoimmune diseases, this could prove to be detrimental for their recovery"

Oh, for fucks sake.

Chapter End Notes

I hope this serves as a gentle reminder that Joe is in fact a bit of a creep. While rewatching the series, I had completely forgot he masturbated to a picture of an unconscious teen Beck. And yes, that is very disgusting; I feel like it's also essential to underline how Joe doesn't love in a normal way, but he specifically chooses vulnerable targets. That's why he finds a knocked out young Beck attractive. And that's also why he finds a drugged up Will alluring, he thinks he prefers voluntary vulnerability (Which is what Hannibal prefers), but he gets off just as much off of involuntary vulnerability.

Anyways, a very tasty chapter is coming. So if you like mind games and want to see a bit more of Joe's and Hannibal's interactions, keep reading!

Erastès.

Chapter Summary

Joe and Hannibal have a session. Some misunderstandings get cleared up, while others get created.

Chapter Notes

Alternative title for this chapter is: author finally gets to apply their classical studies to something.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I let the warm, earthy and reassuring scent of sandalwood infiltrate my nostrils, knowing fully well it's all for appearance; a way for the big bad wolf to dress himself up for little red riding hood.

I stare at the ceiling imagining blood slowly dripping in this nonsensical art nouvea style studio and coloring it's floors. Maybe a pop of crimson would do well for the grey palette of this historical building repurposed into an office.

I look back at my phone, the same article I had been mindlessly gawking at for the past thirty minutes or so in my car. A familiarly disfigured face stares right back, accompanied by an attention grabbing scarlet headline.

RIPPER STRIKES ONCE AGAIN!

When is the fbi going to put a stop to this?

*With their favorite asset finally out of the game, the fbi once again fails at protecting the lives of Maryland's citizens. Our new victim, Dr. Sutcliffe, was found in his office by a nurse today at 6 am. His head was ripped apart at the jaw with surgical precision and.... **READ MORE***

~~I can't help but envision my own corpse, manipulated into it's own complicated tableau.~~

I calm my breathing by caressing my arm and counting each small hair that the visits to your dogs have left on my jacket. They all adore me, swarming me with kisses and impatiently waiting for me to coddle them. Even the newer one, whom I learned the name of thanks to your facebook messages, Winston, has warmed up to me. He lays flat on his back, exposing his belly to me, as if he wasn't immensely skittish only a month ago.

I think of you.

I never was a big fan of true crime, but these days I've found myself spiraling into the endless rabbit hole that is the Ripper's criminal activity. I looked at each face, each body carefully maneuvered into a new, equally horrifying, spectacle.

I found comfort in the thought that you, at some point in your life, were doing just the same, searching for him; you were walking in a narrow tunnel obscured by darkness and you knew, somehow, but you just couldn't get to him. Not only were you aimlessly searching while being pushed around, but someone was also leading you astray. The very someone you were looking for.

I really didn't have a choice but go to this, oh so generous, pro-bono appointment. I couldn't not show up and risk getting turned in because of some vomit sample or whatever your psychiatrist has on me. I couldn't escape to another state and change my identity, because how could I ever leave you, Will?

I know, I've done it again. I got attached. Can you even blame me when you're the only one who *sees* me and doesn't run away screaming?

Candace only peeked in the keyhole of my heart and was disgusted by the very thing she created. I fixed the (really annoying) obstacle in our relationship, an obstacle that was bothering her. She still left me, even after I dirtied my hands for her. Can you believe that?

I drove her to our spot, but no matter how much I explained how it was necessary to make us work, she just didn't want to try hard enough for our relationship. She didn't want to understand.

It's not like I enjoyed what I did, I'm not your psychiatrist who finds glee in depriving someone of their life. But, what was I supposed to do? Let her deprive me of my freedom?

I lean my head back on a couch that probably costs more than my right kidney, feeling the reassuring weight of my gun behind my back. I don't actually think the good doctor is going to kill me yet, but you know, just in case. Considering his 10/10 reviews as a psychiatrist and that he normally tends to prefer complicated arrangements over splattering quick kills on his pristine floors, I believe I'm fairly safe. In fact, I'm pretty sure he wants to figure out why was I stalking him.

(But hey, what do I know? Maybe he likes a messy thing on the side.)

No, no getting paranoid. Remember the advantage. Ergo, you, Will.

That's right, he has absolutely no idea you're the driving force behind all of my actions; it's even possible he won't ever see it, being the narcissistic grandiose asshole that he is. He can't even see how far his own obsession for you is branching, but I can tell, I've been there.

He'll see it slowly take over the galleries of his mind, watch as it engulfs his basic convictions and curse it when he acts all according to his plans but miscalculates just how much he craves it.

You are going to be the very thing that will shatter him and viceversa, just like a teacup falling on the floor flinging shards of ceramic all around, he will drag you down with him.

But I won't let that happen.

The door creaks open, the tunes of Liszt's A Dante Symphony creep out accompanying a pair of long legs adorned by a carefully celestial blue ironed suit. A blue reminiscent of the immense

midnight sky that stands out in the middle of the Mausoleum of Gallia Placida. It's color is said to allude to the theme of eternal sleep, ergo Death.

Before my gaze can even begin to travel, I close my eyes instinctively and stay still as I desperately try to remember which movement do the violin's icidly elegant notes belong to.

"Mr Mooney." His voice is ice, surgically cutting through my thoughts and suddenly I remember.

Composed by Liszt, A Dante Symphony: 01 Inferno.

"Please, come in." He stands aside and tilts his head, wearing the most approachable expression he's able to muster, like a perfectly fitting costume.

'Abandon all hope, those who enter.' I think, as i cross the threshold and let my eyes adapt to the warm, yet dark lighting of the office. The book and art lined neoclassical studio in medium gray envelops me in it's chokingly dramatics and I trace my eyes over all of the arches supported by columns.

I listen intently as the soft music gets more intense and the door gently shuts from behind me. He's there, I can feel his piercing gaze, *analyzing what exactly?* He's not moving.

He's waiting for me to sit in.. one of these chairs, maybe. Is this already a way to analyze his patients depending on which chair they choose?

"Joseph, I assure you nobody has died as a result of my practice. Sit down." I can feel the subtle amusement in his voice and even though if turned I would only see his bland face, I know he is internally finding this whole situation hilarious. He's so sure that even if he doesn't know everything about me, he will find it out now.

He doesn't know about you and i. I tell myself, as I inhale the ever more present smell of sandalwood and make my way to sit on a small brown leather couch. I let myself run my hands on the material as those elegant pair of legs take a seat on the couch opposite to me, I watch as they cross and look up to find a pair of eyes watching me back.

It's only then that I notice that the first movement has stopped and the second one picks up with the tiny hopeful sounds of trumpets.

Composed by Liszt, A Dante Symphony: 02 Purgatorio.

I force my eyes to travel upwards and meet his. "Thank you for coming, Mr Mooney." He says and I look at the perfect picture of fakeness as it's words, which are are completely detached from it's person, leave it's mouth.



Does this façade work on anyone who's brain isn't on fire? Because I know you've been here, you in all of your sweaty gorgeously helpless self in this chair, relying blindly on this man. No, scratch that, this thing. If you entered this office now, you would stare right through the carefully constructed bars of his fancy cage and you would see him for what he is. And you would leave because of it. Because he's not like me, I try to be a good person, I really do. I can't help but feel a bit better just thinking about it, I mean surely psychiatrist analysis by Dr Lecter must be a great first date topic, considering it will now be a shared experience.

I let silence fall and hope for him to start talking, but he merely stares back and I can't help but slightly shift in my seat, feeling for the cool presence of reassurance behind my back. Then, I sigh. "Not like I had much of a choice, Really."

His eyes slightly crinkle up from getting a response out of me. He elegantly ignores my comment, uncrossing his legs, raising his left hand and pointing upwards with a finger, just like he did when giving me a 'head start'. "Since we share an affinity for classical music, I thought this choice of music would be appreciated."

Oh, how generous. It's like I get to pick my poison.

"It is." I mutter and yet again, there's silence. Dreadful silence that makes me squirm and makes the session pass by even slower. It's not like anything harmful is going to come out of this if I just attempt meaningless conversation, right? We've already established he probably won't kill me. As long as he doesn't figure out about you, Will, everything's going to be fine.

I hesitantly speak, tilting my head towards the faint tunes of the violin. "This is more my style."

He waits for my eyes to go back to his face before speaking, his face as emotionless as ever. I only realize my mistake upon hearing his tone, which upon careful inspection, seems almost delighted. "Compared to who's, Joseph?" What a lonely fuck, getting his entertainment from toying with my brain.

"Mr Mooney." I reply quietly.

"Of course, Ivan." I internally wince at the familiar way in which the name rolls off his tongue. He carries on: "Mr Mooney enjoyed Weinberg, Stravinskij and Shostakovich. What do you prefer, Mr Goldberg?"

Oh, there it is. I was wondering when 'Goldberg' was going to come up. I know the good doctor is a boomer, but he's got to have an iPad to play candy crush on. It was only a matter of time until he googled me and found out I'm not Mr Mooney's son, I tell myself, yet the increasingly helpless feeling I have from losing another one of my advantages persists.

I keep going nonetheless, for you. "Tchaikovsky, Liszt and Saint Saens."

He leans back, crossing his legs and resting his hands on top of his knees. "Ah, a romantic." He blinks and in an almost cat-like manner, tilts his head at me. "Do you believe in love, Joseph?"

"Yes. Don't we all desire it?"

He slightly shakes his head, as if he were reprimanding a child. "Believing in and desiring it are two different things. One needs the support of the other to even exist, whereas one can believe in love and not feel the desire to possess it."

"Who says desiring love means desiring to possess it?"

His lips twist into a sphinx-like smile. "Love is a fleeting ungraspable concept, the lover who doesn't recognize it's ephemeral nature and desires not to merely live it, wishes to contain it as long as possible."

"To protect it, as long as possible." I correct.

He sighs, leaning forward with irritation slowly creeping into his tone, yet his expression is unmovable. "To deny love it's nature, is to limit it, not to protect it."

I contain a scoff and spit back acidly. "Love cannot be limited, it's ever-growing."

"Yes. That is the reason why putting it in a little cage is so ridiculous."

You know what is ridiculous? **This!** I'm not going to let your nepo-baby psychiatrist, who has never experienced love in his lonely narcissistic excuse of a life, lecture me on what love is. I know what it is, Will, because it's what I feel for you. It burns me so deeply that I feel your name etched in my heart. Nobody will ever understand just how important love is to me, except you. This is what makes you so special to me, you can understand. And that is probably why he finds you special too. But he hasn't quite figured it all out yet, so maybe I should feel thankful he doesn't know anything about love.

Yeah, I should be thankful. I lean back into the chair and tilt my head back, maintaining eye contact. "Well, it isn't possible to extend the same line of reasoning onto people. Protecting the people you love is always possible."

Something dark and cold presents itself on his face, coloring his expression for a second before he schools his expression. "Is it?"

What was that? "Of course. From anything."

He raises his eyebrows a bit up, silently judging. "Even from themselves?"

"Yes. The lover only needs to be willing to sacrifice anything for the beloved's best interest." I reply, confidently. That's what I had to do with Candace. She only slept with that music producer, Elijah, because she was pressured into it by the industry. I did her a favor by pushing that guy off a balcony, yet she didn't recognize it as such. ~~Ungrateful bitch.~~

He makes my thought process halt by leaning back and studying me by narrowing his eyes. "What about from the lover?"

"What?"

"What if the lover is the root of the problem?"

".. I'm not."

He sighs and readjusts his suit, very subtly looking at the clock behind me before he speaks. "In the symposium, written by Plato, Socrates recounts an encounter he had with Diotima. Diotima says the lover seeks and desires what the lover does not possess, so if the lover desires love itself, it means it is lacking it. If the lover says they love the concept of love while experiencing it, then the

lover is continuing to seek not quite it, but the constant presence of it. Thus, love itself becomes the name for the pursuit of wholeness, for the desire to be complete, not the actual reality of it."

Oh, isn't he a smartass. Is he going to diagnose me with a delusional disorder or something? He probably believes he has me all figured out, for the exception of whom the beloved is. "What do we make of the beloved in this case, then?" I ask, relinquishing the feeling of having an ace up my sleeve.

He inconspicuously furrows his brows, as if the answer were obvious. "The beloved does not matter to the lover in this case. Only the act of loving does."

Okay, can I punch him? I feel like getting to punch him should be part of the therapeutic journey. How can he sit there and imply I'm doing something as stupid as 'falling in love with the concept of love instead of a person.' I know I shouldn't take this personally and him believing I'm nothing more than that is actually preferable, but I can't help but feel offended.

I clarify my question. "If the lover seeks what he doesn't possess then what does that say about the beloved?"

"That the beloved is the perfect mirror to the lovers soul. Reflecting what it craves most and doing so understanding it's essence."

"How can someone reflect what the other doesn't have, yet understand them fully to the point of being the perfect companion?"

I feel his gaze sharpen, just as his lips quirk up into an actual twistedly dark grin. He stays silent, holding the answer above my head before narrowing his eyes and saying: "Empathy."

...

I grip the leather arms of the couch. The silence that comes afterwards is unbearable. I stay still, trying my best to understand how did i, once again, hand him the upper hand on a nice silver platter.

He can't have possibly figured it out already.

"Are you a dog person, Joseph?" He asks, tilting his head at me.

Oh, of course. The fucking dog hair. I forgot this OCD freak probably has memorized every inch of your person, including the particular smell that seven dogs leave you with. But it's not only that, is it? He saw me in the same hospital you were staying in, with a half-empty container of jambalaya, then he waltzed into your room and probably smelled, being the creepy fucker that he is, the remnants of my food on you. Then, with this neat little session, he figured out, not only what am I after, but also why was I stalking him, to protect you, and connected all the dots.

He stands up and I catch the faint shimmer of a small metal weapon inside his sleeve. (A scalpel?) He adjusts his cufflinks and speaks, ignoring my lack of response. "Our session seems to have reached it's end, Mr Goldberg." He says, hiding the amount of pleasure he's feeling upon seeing me almost flinch just because he stood up.

I internally scream at my legs to work again and that's when I hear the faint sounds of nervous steps just behind me, in the hallway of the waiting room.

I exhale a shaky sigh of relief. Someone's there, so he's not going to succumb to his anger and tear my throat out right now.

I hesitantly stand up, walk towards the door and as I put my hand on the gothic handle, I finally stop hearing the rumbling of my blood in my ears, but hear the, very far away, melodic voices of a choir instead.

Composed by Liszt, A Dante Symphony: 03 Magnificat.

I turn the handle, step out and immediately the anxious figure stops pacing. He whips his head around in my direction and he stares at me with an odd look of confusion, surprise and a tiny bit of dislike.

His eyes slowly glance up, behind me, and they fill up with a worryingly amount of warmth, admiration and hope. And it's only then that I recognize him.

He's Tobias' friend from the opera, ergo Doctor Lecter's patient that oozed a disgustingly amount of insecurity and need for validation from each one of his pores.

I was so concentrated on Tobias' and Doctor Lecter's power games that night that I didn't even bother googling this smaller man. What even was his name?

"Franklin." Doctor Lecter greets, not even bothering to hide his amount of dislike to the man. And that's.. weird, since he usually conceals it so well. Is he tired or something?

"Joseph." He says in a low, velvety and sultry tone and wait *what?*

I turn around and your psychiatrist's expression at this moment would probably be found by opening a dictionary and looking under the definition of 'smitten'.

He slowly raises his hand and touches my elbow-- *what the actual fuck is going on.* Then, he lowers his head, matching my height and says in a tone quiet enough for it to be private, but loud enough for it to be heard by his patient. "Today, at eight o'clock sharp. I'd **love** to have you for dinner."

No no no. Fuck this. What is he doing? By not even saying something like 'i'll text you the address' he's establishing I've already been there, which I have, but not in the way he's implying. He's not even bothering to ask if I want to, thus this could be read as something we've already done. If he wanted to invite me over to kill me, he wouldn't have done it Infront of a witness, nor would he have said it in such a 'seductive' manner. He's completely ignoring all of the social etiquette I *know* this fucker knows.

Is he doing this on purpose? That has to be the only answer. But why would he want to anger this small unstable man who clearly wants to have an intimate relationship with him, by making him think he has started one with another patient of his?

I stay silent, not moving an inch. Your psychiatrist, being the asshole that he is, takes that as a 'yes, I'd love to!' and tilts his head with a smile, quietly telling me to leave.

I decide that standing here and clarifying the situation under your psychiatrist's horrifyingly fake half-lidded gaze isn't worth it and walk away, desperately trying to get away from this situation as fast as possible. As I leave, i try to ignore the intense stare that his patient is silently giving me.

Will, I should really get a prize for all of the things I do for you.

Chapter End Notes

You asked for mind games and I (hopefully) delivered them! I really hope I managed to keep you all on your toes throughout this chapter. <3

I also hope the reason why Hannibal acted the way he did at the end is clear. (Let's just say, Hannibal doesn't really want to dirty his hands.)

Fun fact: the image for this chapter had been sitting in my gallery for a lot of time and I'm so happy I finally got to use it!!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!